A WOMAN'S TALENT

AND OTHER STORIES

JULIA MORRELL HUNT

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A WOMAN'S TALENT

AND

OTHER STORIES

BY

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A WOMAN'S TALENT.

A WOMAN'S TALENT.

"So you knew Eloïsa de Sevrénac — Eliza Mariner was her maiden name?"

"Yes, I knew her well," replied Mr. Sebastian Jones, as he sat lazily before the open window, stroking the ends of his fair mustache. His pale face was in the full glare of the morning light; his gray eyes were half closed, as though to shield their color from the sun.

"Where did you first meet her, Jones? and was it at the time of her literary fame?"

"I met her in Paris. I first knew of her writings through her husband, who spoke of them in reference to himself."

"She had great talent. The publishers waited in vain for a second book, but they said she stopped writing after that first production."

"Madame de Sevrénac never finished but one book, and it was a great success."

"How like a foolish woman to throw her talent aside at the very moment when it might come to good."

"Madame de Sevrénac was not a foolish woman, but a wise one; she gave up her work to please her husband." The color came into Mr. Sebastian Jones's pale face as he turned away to light his cigar.

"You were a friend of Monsieur de Sevrénac during your sojourn in Paris, were you not?"

"It was through the husband I came to know the wife."

"A very beautiful girl, I always thought."

"And a very gifted one," said Mr. Sebastian Jones quietly.

"How came she to change her Christian name?"

"Monsieur de Sevrénac could not pronounce Eliza: his foreign tongue refused to form the syllable."

"Eloisa suits the girl well."

"Yes; for in her ways she is almost a French woman now," said Mr. Sebastian Jones.

In Paris the whirl was increasing, the business growing, the crowd multiplying, the gayety progressing.

Maurice de Sevrénac was out.

His wife, Eloïsa de Sevrénac, was at home.

Impatiently in her *salon* she awaited his return; anxiously she looked for his presence. At every sound she started; at every carriage wheel she listened. She sat alone; her white hands clasped around her knees, her head forward to catch the familiar tread of his footsteps on the stair. Stretching out her hand she lightly touched the bell for her servant to appear. A knock followed at the curtained door; the butler stood before her.

"Bring me some tea, François. You need not wait for Monsieur de Sevrénac."

Just then a carriage stopped in the street below; Madame de Sevrénac pressed her lace handkerchief to her brow. "It is he," she murmured. Then as Monsieur de Sevrénac came in she rose to meet him. He was large and conspicuous looking, his face stern, his forehead wrinkled like that of a man who had lived many years, planned many projects, thought many thoughts, accom-

plished many things. His dress was fashionable; his appearance striking.

"You are late, Maurice," said the young girl.

"Not very late," replied her husband, putting down his gloves before taking his wife's hand. "I beg your pardon if I have kept you waiting."

"No, you have not kept me waiting, but it seemed long until you came."

He laughed briefly, and walking to the tea-table begged that he might have a strong cup of tea. Madame de Sevrénac poured out the steaming beverage, her hand trembled as she dropped the lumps of sugar into the dainty Dresden cup. Her cheeks burned as she saw her husband watching her.

"Enough sugar, Eloïsa, I always take but two lumps; to-day you honor me with four." The girl laughed nervously and said she must be growing older, — absent-minded, perhaps.

Monsieur de Sevrénac raised his cup to his lips; as he put it back upon the tray, he glanced admiringly at his well-polished fingers.

"Maurice," said his wife, then stopped, embarrassed.

"Yes?" replied her husband.

"You have brought my book to me? Remember you promised to bring it to-day."

"I always keep my promise," he said.

"Is the binding a success?" cried the girl, flushing.

"Ask rather if the composition is a success," said Monsieur de Sevrénac wisely.

"But, Maurice, I am so delighted to think that my stories are complete." She clasped her hands about her husband's arm and looked up into his face with her bright smile. Monsieur de Sevrénac drew his brows together in his troubled fashion.

"I have been excited all day at the prospect of seeing the book at last. Quickly, give it to me, Maurice." Monsieur de Sevrénac withdrew from his wife's embrace. He walked promptly to the table, and picking up a neatly wrapped parcel gave it to the girl. Hastily she untied the string, nervously she undid the paper covering.

"My book!" she cried, holding it up in her slender fingers. Her lips quivered and her hands grew cold as she turned the leaves of her own book. In print she read the names of her own stories; in print she gazed at the words of her own manuscripts; in print she saw her own writ-

ings ; her ambitions gratified ; her hopes fulfilled ! As Monsieur de Sevrénac watched her his face grew stern and his expression did not reflect her happiness, her joy. He was a proud, a difficult man. To him his wife's talent was an annoyance, a bore. Her work was a mistake, a mortification to his stern character, to his peculiar mind. He disliked to think that his wife gave her opinions, her thoughts, her ideas, — her very self to the curious, eager world. His wife should belong to him and to him alone. But Eloïsa did not seem to understand. To have an occupation, an interest, a dream, was all she wanted, all she craved. To the young woman her stories were but the expression of her thought, the reflection of her soul. Eliza Mariner had settled down in the French capital as the wife of an older man. In America she had been satisfied with her own independence, her own surroundings. But the momentary glitter of the Parisian city, the fashion of the Parisian life had dazzled her. Monsieur Maurice de Sevrénac was well-born, well-bred, well-mannered. The girl felt proud of his friendship, proud of his attentions. In him she had hoped to find her life. She bade good-by to her

own people with a stout heart and with a brave spirit.

"I am quite content; you must not think of me," she said, as her father passed his handkerchief across his eyes in parting from her.

In her new life, as the wife of the Frenchman, for a time her thoughts were diverted, her days occupied. But at length the minutes seemed to slacken, the hours to lengthen in her married life. She wondered how other women did when the first flutter of their wedding had subsided; when people no longer asked about them; talked about them; planned the present and future of their lives.

Eloïsa de Sevrénac had no desire to sit idly in the world with her hands folded. She wanted occupation. Often she would watch her husband in his business interests, in his social pleasures, with a certain kind of envy in her young heart. She felt she stood aside, like a stranger looking on. Her queer nature needed sympathy, needed understanding of a different kind. She spoke French easily; she understood it perfectly. As a proof of her kindness, the first winter of her marriage she had persuaded her young sister

to remain in France. Few women would do that.

"Make your home with me!" she generously cried, and the girl did so.

Monsieur de Sevrénac had married late in life. He was a much respected, a widely courted man. He was correct in his manners, correct in his dress. He was formal in his speech, formal in his ideas. He was particular in his tastes, particular in his home. To his wife he was polite, respectful always.

But it happened that Eloïsa de Sevrénac saw she needed occupation, her days were not full enough, she felt. So on she lived and hoped and waited for a sign of some talent, for an interest in her days. Gradually the truth seemed to dawn upon her, the light began to stream through her mind. She had not looked in vain, for lo! she found her talent. With her pen in hand she lived in another world, she dreamed in a new land. Faster and faster came her ideas; wider and wider spread her understanding. The atmosphere seemed to change; the birds, the trees, the flowers, came to know her mind, her thought, her soul. In her work she found a higher life, a life

sne loved too well. Then her husband began to realize the change. Little by little he saw that in her occupation she was drifting from him. They had been married not a year when Eloïsa seemed content to have him absent; content to be alone. The proud man held his peace, but he felt his disappointment keenly. He suffered the day he learned the truth. He realized that this ambition would be the most precious interest of her life. How differently he had planned her future a few short months ago! One time he tried to show his disapproval by a word, a look; but with no avail whatever. Eloïsa seemed blinded to his disappointment, to his judgment of her work. The girl's mind ran on; her brain evolved its plans, its plots.

When Monsieur de Sevrénac examined the manuscripts he was surprised at her ingenuity, her talent. Eloïsa was radiant at his praise.

In her enthusiasm she often wrote in the late evenings when her husband was away, and far into the lonely nights she would form the characters of her days, her life. Thus twelve busy months flew by. Her manuscripts were complete for publication; her stories showed the strength, the pathos,

of her mind. Monsieur de Sevrénac did not speak out when she begged him to have them published for her. But he felt sorry all the same. He feared the fame which would bring her into public notice, and he hated to have her writings advertised for sale.

Now when he saw her excitement at the first step to her coming honors, to her promising glory, he was annoyed, but was it not too late?

"Are you not satisfied with my work?" she cried, noting the look of disappointment in his eyes.

"I am satisfied with the talent; but as I have often tried to show you, it is distasteful to me to have my wife pose as a writer of fiction."

"Even when it is of so pure, so pleasing a character?"

"Yes; for there are plenty of women more qualified to fill the *rôle* of authorship than yourself."

"But if I am successful, why am I not qualified for it too?"

"Because it is out of keeping with your position, your prominence — your beauty, Eloïsa."

Madame de Sevrénac flushed crimson: perhaps

she felt the depth of her husband's admiration for her.

"I would not willingly displease you, Maurice," she said.

"Then give up your writings for me." The girl turned very pale.

"Give up my writings!" she cried. "Without them I would be miserable!"

"You pay me a poor compliment," said Monsieur de Sevrénac shortly.

"Would you give up your business for me?" cried the girl.

"No; for you would have to make sacrifices in consequence. There is no comparison in the two cases."

"My work has been a great happiness to me."

"If your own good judgment does not prove to you the mistake of continuing in it, my dear, I shall say no more." Monsieur de Sevrénac moved to the door as he spoke.

"My talent is my judge," said the girl. Monsieur de Sevrénac inclined his head in his courtly fashion. "Let it be as you desire," he said.

"I would not have put my name to the book had I realized your opinion in the matter."

"Ah! that is where the danger comes in. As an authoress you are subject to criticism, to praise, to blame. I dislike that my name should be made public without any good excuse, without any real cause."

"The next book I write shall be anonymous," said Madame de Sevrénac proudly.

Then Monsieur de Sevrénac went away and left her. She stood motionless, looking after him with her book open in her hand.

Soon she read the criticisms of her work. Some praised the strength, the greatness, of her mind. Others the completeness, the charm, of her characters; the freshness, the newness, of her plots. But Monsieur de Sevrénac read one criticism which he did not show his wife. It was against the morbid pathos of her ideas, against the unnatural struggles of her thought. "The authoress has suffered; she is unhappy in her life" — this critic said.

How bitterly the husband scanned the cruel words, how bitterly he scorned the insult to his name! His wife unhappy! Ridiculous! Impos-

sible! His wife thus spoken of; thus written of in public print!

One day as the young authoress sat alone in her library, her paper before her, her pen in hand, the husband came home unexpectedly to luncheon. He hurried up the stairs and through the hall. His wife did not rise to greet him as he entered the room. She was occupied with her writing. His brows contracted slightly as he saw her flushed and eager bending over her new work. For the authoress had won praise. She was intent on another book to be finished within the year. Her face glowed with enthusiasm, with talent as she stopped a moment to take rest. She turned and saw her husband standing at her side.

"Maurice!" she cried; "I did not know that you were here."

"I have come to luncheon with you," he said. Slowly she pushed aside her papers, reluctantly she laid down her pen. He stooped, and with his fingers lightly touched her brow.

"Your head is hot," he said. She laughed without replying.

"You must not write too much."

"But I never weary of my work, Maurice," she cried.

"Your first success has made you wish for greater laurels; soon you should be satisfied."

"Not while my talent lasts. I long to write of greater subjects, newer themes."

Monsieur de Sevrénac looked kindly at her; for an instant their eyes met, then the girl turned away.

"Eloïsa," he said, "I have invited a friend of mine to dinner this evening."

"This evening, Maurice?"

"This evening," repeated the Frenchman; "and of course you will be at home with your most gracious smiles to greet him, if you please."

"Who is he?" asked the girl.

"He is an American."

"His name?"

"Mr. Sebastian Jones."

"*Quel nom!*" murmured Madame de Sevrénac.

"You need make no exclamation; Sebastian is well suited to our hospitality — to our home."

"Then you expect me to receive your guest this evening?"

"If you please, my dear."

"And the engagement I have made to take my sister to the opera?"

"I beg your pardon, but this is my first knowledge of it; and under the circumstances, I fear you will have to find another chaperon."

"It is late to do so now, and I hate to disappoint the girl."

"But she will readily accept your explanation," said Monsieur de Sevrénac.

Madame de Sevrénac dressed herself in white that evening. When Mr. Sebastian Jones was announced her face wore its usual happy smile. To herself she murmured, "A commonplace American whom I know I shall dislike."

Monsieur de Sevrénac stepped forward with outstretched hand to greet his guest; then, turning to his wife, he said, "Madame de Sevrénac." There was something very courteous in the Frenchman's manner to his wife. Mr. Sebastian Jones bowed to his hostess; he made no attempt to offer her his hand.

"Madame de Sevrénac sees few Americans nowadays," said her husband. His effort to begin the conversation was graceful and well

put. The American was not embarrassed; he seemed at his ease in the Parisian home.

"Nevertheless, I hope Madame de Sevrénac keeps up her interest in the people of her own country," he replied.

"I am always glad to be interested in one so welcome as yourself," said the girl promptly. The man's pale face flushed; for an instant his eyes met those of the young hostess.

Soon after the little party went in to dinner: an excellent meal it was. Madame de Sevrénac knew how to cater to her husband and his guests.

During dinner she found herself watching the American. She began to wonder if he would admire and like her. In his bearing he was deferential, but he had an air of bored indifference about him which perplexed her greatly. She had never seen any one in the least like him, she thought. Monsieur de Sevrénac talked easily to the stranger: Eloïsa could see at a glance that they had been intimate for some time. She wondered how it happened that two men so different could be such good company to each other. It was evident that Maurice de Sevrénac was

strangely fascinated by Sebastian Jones; it was something of a triumph for Sebastian Jones.

Maurice de Sevrénac had many friends, but he loved few of them. These very men looked up to the stern man with a feeling of perplexing awe. The American did not seem to have the least fear of his host; he seemed to understand him perfectly. Their conversation was fluent and sprightly throughout. Monsieur de Sevrénac turned frequently to his wife: he never allowed her to feel slighted or out of place while at the head of his table, or as the hostess of his home. Sometimes the girl was absent-minded: she had an unconscious habit of wandering away in the company of her own thoughts; but then her thoughts were filled with plans. After dinner the two friends smoked together, but soon they joined Madame de Sevrénac in the library. Eloïsa stood at the window; she had opened the shutter to let the soft summer wind blow in. She leaned her slight form against the half-drawn curtain; she moved the blind so that she could look down into the crowded streets below.

Some one called to see Monsieur de Sevrénac on business. For a brief time the two Americans

were left alone. Sebastian crossed the room, and, standing near the young girl, looked at her with kindly interest in his eyes.

"You are happy here in Paris?" he asked.

"I have never been unhappy anywhere. I don't quite know what the expression means."

"You are fortunate," said Sebastian.

"In Paris every one is gay," continued the girl: "one sees no distress, no sorrow, here."

"But it exists all the same," replied the young man.

"I suppose it does," said Madame de Sevrénac absently. "Would you like to live here?" she asked, turning her face so that he saw the fine lines of her profile.

"Not as a stranger. Without occupation, without interests, I believe I should go mad."

"All men have occupations," cried the girl; "women have but few."

"Women should be occupied quite as much as men, in a different way of course." Sebastian watched the young wife as he spoke.

"Do you mean that my household duties should suffice me?" she asked. Sebastian laughed.

"They might suffice other women, but you are

not like other women. Are you?" Madame de Sevrénac grew pale; her lips moved, but she did not speak.

"I knew you were different," he said, speaking as though she had agreed with him in his question. Eloïsa laughed nervously, and stretching out her hand drew in the shutter.

"Let me help you," said Sebastian. He fastened the shutter to its catch. When he looked around he saw that Madame de Sevrénac had moved away.

"Have you ever read this book?" she asked, holding up her own volume.

"I have heard of it," said the young man, his pale face relaxing into its strange smile.

"I will lend it to you. But you must promise to give me a truthful criticism when you have read it through."

"I promise," said Mr. Sebastian Jones.

Just then Monsieur de Sevrénac came back and joined them. It was late when the little party broke up and the stranger took his leave. Monsieur de Sevrénac remarked afterward to his wife that the evening was thoroughly successful, which it certainly would not have been without her

presence. Madame de Sevrénac smiled her thanks. The Frenchman had a very pleasing habit of complimenting his young wife. Eloïsa understood it well. She had grown to expect his polished speeches, his gracious words.

A few days later the stranger came to call. He found Madame de Sevrénac in her library. There were writing materials on the table, blank-books, sheets of paper everywhere. He smiled as he glanced at the authoress at her work. She lifted her head as she heard his step on the threshold. The American noticed the deep flush in her face, the excitement in her eyes.

"I shall interrupt you," he said.

"An interruption which is pleasant," replied the girl, rising.

"You must not stop your writing on my account. See! I have brought your book. Let me finish the last story while you write." There was something very fascinating about his manner, a charm which Eloïsa had begun to recognize.

"I shall write one more page, then have done for this afternoon, Mr. Jones," she said. "It is better for me not to write too long. When I am

weary the signs of fatigue seem to creep into my work."

"I shall take this comfortable chair and make myself quite happy while you write."

He seated himself near the table, and opening her book was soon absorbed in its pages. Madame de Sevrénac wrote on. Twice she glanced at the young man. She noticed his refinement, his beauty. It seemed strange for her to have this friend beside her while she worked. Unconsciously she found herself describing his appearance, his charms. Her pen ran on with the history of a new story, the description of a new character. The girl sighed with enthusiasm, with energy, to write the ideas in her mind.

A full hour passed. Mr. Sebastian Jones came to the last page of her book and finished it. For a moment he sat still, his head bent down, his eyes riveted to some object on the flowered carpet at his feet.

"Mr. Jones," said Madame de Sevrénac, "you promised me your criticism. I would like to hear it now." The American roused himself, and then said, "Your book is interesting, pathetic, and refined. I like it. I like it very much indeed."

The authoress trembled with excitement; she had won his praise.

"I am so glad," she cried.

"Had I not liked your work I should have said so, regardless of your feelings, however."

"You must always be quite honest, when asked to criticise another's writing. It would be dreadful to praise a work you did not really value."

"Let me see what you are doing now," said Sebastian, holding out his hand for her manuscript.

"No, no," cried Madame de Sevrénac, "what I have been writing just now you cannot see."

"Have you nothing else you can show me?"

"Here is a story I have finished lately. You might read it aloud, so that I can hear it too." She gave him a neat roll of papers which he opened and began to read. It was a short piece. He soon finished it.

"Excellent!" he said, folding the manuscript up again.

"You praise me too much," exclaimed Madame de Sevrénac, blushing with excitement and pleasure.

"When do you mean to bring out your next book?" asked the American.

"Some time this year."

"Does your husband feel satisfied with it?" he asked. The young wife grew pale.

"Monsieur de Sevrénac has not read these stories," she said.

"Your husband is a good judge of literature. He has made quite a study of it, he tells me."

"I shall show them to him before they are published," said the girl.

"Of course," replied Sebastian.

Soon after Monsieur de Sevrénac came home. He was cordial to his wife, cordial to his guest in his well-bred and formal fashion. But Eloïsa seemed nervous in her manner. Perhaps Mr. Sebastian Jones noticed it, for he went away directly after Monsieur de Sevrénac joined them. Perhaps he found it difficult to converse with Monsieur de Sevrénac that afternoon.

One morning Madame de Sevrénac, who was still hard at work, promised to take a walk with her husband later in the day. She had planned to finish a story that afternoon, but Monsieur de

Sevrénac seemed urgent that she should accompany him to the Bois.

On their return to dinner they met Mr. Sebastian Jones. Maurice begged him to remain with them that evening. He did so. As Madame de Sevrénac entered the library she saw letters on the table.

"The mail!" she exclaimed eagerly. Monsieur de Sevrénac stepped forward to get it for her.

"One from papa," said the girl. "Two from mamma, one from some one else, some one unknown." She turned the last envelope over in her fingers. "No," she murmured, shaking her head, "I don't know the writer of this one." Then she looked doubtfully at all three letters to see which she should open first.

"I shall open you," she said playfully. Slowly she tore apart the envelope. Slowly she read her letter. Her face flushed at first, then grew pale as she finished the contents of the pages.

"Good news, I hope," said Monsieur de Sevrénac, watching her face. The girl laughed and put the letter in her pocket. She did not say who it was from, and her husband seemed to have no curiosity in the matter.

Later at dinner Mr. Sebastian Jones noticed how pale she was. Monsieur de Sevrénac noticed the change in her too.

"You look tired," he said. "Do not work too hard."

"I have not written a line all day," said the girl.

"You are not as bright this evening as usual. Nothing has worried you, I hope?"

"Nothing," said Madame de Sevrénac.

Maurice de Sevrénac pressed her hands; perhaps he detained her a moment longer than usual as he bade her good-night. The girl was nervous and tired, he thought. Willingly she hurried away to her own room to her own thoughts.

The next morning she rose late. Her head was aching, she said. Later, when she picked up her pen to write, her ideas were too confused, too disturbed, to make clear sense.

"To-day I shall take a rest," she thought. So she put away her pen and ink, she folded up her papers. It was the first time her mind had showed fatigue, the first time her talent had failed her. I shall be better to-morrow, she thought.

To-morrow came, but Madame de Sevrénac was

no better. She tried to read over one of her earlier stories, but her head grew weary very soon. She ordered her coupé and went out for a drive. In passing down the Champs-Élysées she saw Mr. Sebastian Jones walking on in front. She leaned back in her carriage so that he could not see her face. The girl's heart beat fast as she watched his fine figure, his graceful walk.

"How handsome he looks!" she murmured. "How different from other men!"

When Madame de Sevrénac returned to her own home she felt strangely alone. She took from her pocket the letter which she had been so careful to conceal. Now with burning cheeks she re-read the contents. The writing was unfamiliar to her, the composition strange.

"How dare he send me this!" she cried. The words were in praise of her book, encouragement of her talent. It was evident that the writer was greatly interested in the gifted young authoress. No signature, no name, disclosed who he might be. The letter was certainly an unusual one. Madame de Sevrénac felt justly indignant that it should have been addressed to her. Perhaps her husband could arrange to make some answer to it? But

how show it to him, how tell him of the audacity of the writer? Had he not already warned her of the danger to her position and her pride? the mistake in making a public character of his name and hers? Well could she picture his wrath, his anger, at this unfortunate circumstance.

Then, too, Eloïsa had become attached to the young American. Had he not been sympathetic, had he not been kind to her? She put the letter back in her pocket. No, this time she would forgive the insult, but the next time — the girl grew red, then white — there could be no next time! Surely this would end her annoyance, her fears! Mr. Sebastian Jones must know too well to repeat his foolish venture!

Monsieur de Sevrénac invited his friend to dinner the next evening. But the young wife pleaded a headache.

"You do not look ill to-day," said Maurice.

"But I am too weary. I cannot entertain your guest, Maurice. My sister will stay at home and take my place."

"No one can take your place, Eloïsa," said her husband. He took her hands and pressed them

tenderly in his; his affection touched her. She leaned her head against his arm.

"Maurice," she began.

"Eloïsa?" he replied.

"I do not feel well nowadays." He raised her face and looked into her eyes.

"I fear your work has been too constant," he said.

She flushed.

"No, no, Maurice; I have not written lately."

"Too tired to think out your plots?" he asked.

"Yes, too tired — too tired to accomplish anything."

She hid her eyes and quickly brushed away a tear.

"You must cheer up, my dear," Monsieur de Sevrénac spoke formally; his wife felt strangely disappointed at the stiffness of his manner. It seemed impossible for the Frenchman to sympathize with any one, she thought. She withdrew her hands from his and moved away; how could this cold, proud man understand her trouble? She became afraid of the strong temptation within her to tell him everything. Was he not too stern, too difficult, to forgive the writer of that letter?

She shuddered when she thought of Sebastian facing him in his wrath; what could he say, how excuse himself before the indignation of his friend?

Madame de Sevrénac passed a quiet evening in her room. Monsieur de Sevrénac brought her messages of interest, expressions of sympathy from his young friend.

"Sebastian asked if you would soon be well; he hopes to call upon you to-morrow afternoon. I promised you would see him; of course you will remain at home?"

"I don't know," she murmured; "wait until to-morrow comes."

"We missed you greatly," said Monsieur de Sevrénac. Madame de Sevrénac was silent; she was thinking of the letter. If another came how hide it from her husband?

The next morning another anonymous letter did come to Madame de Sevrénac; it criticised her forthcoming book. "She worked too fast, her talent could not stand the mental strain."

She was much excited by the warning, fearful of what the writer might say next.

"You will receive the American when he comes this afternoon, Eloïsa," said her husband in parting from her, after their *café* in the breakfast room.

"Since you wish it, I shall remain at home," replied the young wife; she felt sorry for her husband as she watched him from the window. He was always very kind; how could she have the heart to deceive him? The girl was so miserable all the morning that when afternoon came her nerves were quite unstrung.

Later, when the mail was brought to her, a presentiment came over her. Sebastian had written to her again! Quickly she turned over her envelopes: yes, here before her eyes lay the dreaded writing! She sat down at her desk and controlled her emotion well. With angry gaze she read this third message; it was but a renewal of the first letter, written in much the same strain, complimenting her genius, advising the publication of another book. What could it mean? The girl felt sick and weary; the contradictions were most annoying to the authoress.

"Why must he torment me thus!" she cried.

When Mr. Jones was announced he found Madame de Sevrénac seated before the window, a piece of fancy-work in her lap. His face brightened as she spoke to him.

"Not writing to-day?" he asked pleasantly.

"I have not written for some time."

"Surely you do not dream of renouncing your talent?"

"My talent has renounced me; I can write no more."

"Write no more!" cried the American.

"My brain refuses to work for me."

"Such talent as yours could not disappear so suddenly. Give yourself time, Madame de Sevrénac, and all may go well."

He spoke with so much kindness, so much concern, that she was touched, astonished.

"I have grown discouraged."

"Why discouraged?" asked Sebastian.

"Because I am so disappointed — so weary sometimes."

"When I first met you a few months ago, you were filled with enthusiasm, radiant with joy. What has changed you so?"

"Don't ask me." Sebastian picked up the

corner of her work; quite accidentally he touched her hand in doing so.

"I beg your pardon," he said; but the girl had been frightened by it. She saw the words of the letters before her. Cold grew her fingers: fast beat her heart.

"Mr. Jones!" she cried.

"You are trembling, you are ill," said the American; "let me get you something."

"Yes—I am ill—wretched—unhappy."

"Tell me what has changed you so?" Sebastian's voice was very gentle, very low. "Tell me what it is?"

"How can I tell *you?*" she cried. "*You* of all people!"

"Why should you not tell me? I am well able to understand. Are we not both young? both Americans? Come, for the moment, let us cast aside our formality, our fear of one another. Tell me what has changed you?"

"One day," began Eloïsa, "you were here at the time, I received a letter—a very impudent letter. I did not know who wrote it, who sent it. At first I wanted to tell Monsieur de Sevrénac—then I was afraid. The more I thought of it the

more frightened I became. I worried by day, I worried by night. I longed to free myself of the burden of such a thing. Then just when I hoped I was beginning to forget, beginning to grow stronger, I received two more letters. It is dreadful, it is hateful to me."

Sebastian grew very pale; he half closed his drooping lids; he scarce knew what to say. She noticed it.

"I am very glad you told me," he said.

"If it ever happens again, I shall tell my husband. He will settle the affair for me."

"I would tell him now," said Sebastian. Madame de Sevrénac opened her eyes in surprise. This man had no fear then. Did he think the husband would forgive him because he was his friend?

"You astonish me!" she said.

"Why?" he asked.

"Because of the advice you give me."

"It is the best I know of," he answered. "Tell your husband this very day. It will relieve your mind to give your trouble up to him."

"And what if he accuses some one wrongly?"

"Monsieur de Sevrénac is too wise for that."

Then Sebastian rose and took his leave. Madame de Sevrénac sat still. After he had gone she thought of many things. She was more confident of herself now, more content in her mind.

She felt that she had made a bold stroke in telling Sebastian about the letters. But little by little she began to feel sure that Sebastian had written them. As she had threatened to speak to Monsieur de Sevrénac, he would not dare to send her any more.

Madame de Sevrénac soon grew stronger; the desire to write gradually came back to the young authoress. If she were more easily tired, more easily discouraged, she did not show it. She persevered nobly with her work.

One day Sebastian Jones offered to read her manuscript to her. She hesitated before giving it to him. But at length his request was so urgent, and her desire so strong for his criticism, that she handed him her work. "What do you think of it, please?" said the girl, flushing with anticipation.

"I don't like the story," said the American.

"You don't like the story!" Madame de Sevrénac could not hide her disappointment.

"No," repeated Sebastian. "I don't like the story. It is not written in your usual brisk style."

"But I have taken great pains over it," cried the authoress.

"What do you mean to do with it?"

"To send it to a magazine."

"Don't send it," said Sebastian earnestly. "Don't send it, Madame de Sevrénac." Eloïsa showed her astonishment. The old, nervous expression came back into her eyes. Her hands trembled, her knees shook. Perhaps Sebastian Jones noticed her emotion, for he smiled kindly at her.

"Put away your writings for a time," he said. "I think you will feel stronger if you do."

"Then you think that my talent has fled from me?" she cried. "You think that I can no longer live in the joy of my writings? I could have borne anything but this!" She pressed her hands together in her misery, her disappointment.

"It seems very hard for you," said Sebastian. "But this time perhaps you will be guided by my advice."

"You allude to the letters!" exclaimed the authoress. "For I did not do as you said."

"Yes," said Sebastian; "I allude to the letters."

"I could not tell my husband, I thought it wiser to bear my troubles alone."

"You did wrong."

"I did wrong! Mr. Jones, I beseech you tell me what you know of those letters."

"I know this — it would be wiser for you to tell your husband that you have received them, and that you resent the insult to your name."

"But Monsieur de Sevrénac will be angry, mortified. I would not like him to realize the danger of my position as an authoress. It would be no easy matter now for me to convince my husband that this is a fitting *rôle* for his wife. If I told him this circumstance, he would deny me the dearest interest of my life!"

"I can see how truly you love your work; it is all in all to you. But in time your husband might allow you to resume your writing. In any event, let Monsieur de Sevrénac decide the matter for you; he knows best about such things."

Madame de Sevrénac sat silent; she saw the American looking at her in his earnest fashion. Presently she said, "I will take your advice."

"Thank you," said the American, holding out

his hand for good-by. Mr. Sebastian Jones did not stay to dinner that evening.

When the Frenchman came home that night he saw his wife was much excited. The old, nervous manner had returned, her eyes glittered, her hands shook. Monsieur de Sevrénac seemed much concerned about his young wife. He begged her to rest quietly and not go out that evening. She did so. Eloïsa had no heart for gayety just then.

In vain she waited to begin her conversation with the proud, stern man. How plead for the forgiveness which she wanted for his friend?

Twice the girl attempted to speak, twice her lips parted, but no sound came forth.

"Maurice," she began.

"I am here," replied her husband, taking his cigar from his mouth.

"Maurice."

"What is it, Eloïsa?" Her heart was beating fast.

"Maurice, do you think we shall go away from Paris this summer?"

"Go away from Paris! What has made you think about summer now? It is only early spring."

"I don't know," said the girl, her cheeks flushing. Monsieur de Sevrénac noticed his wife's manner. He saw her color come and go. Walking to the book-case he selected a volume from his costly collection, and, drawing a chair near the lamp, sat down to read. Madame de Sevrénac watched the expression of his face. His face was always stern, intelligent, and grave. It was very difficult, but Eloïsa thought she would try again.

"Maurice."

"My dear," said the Frenchman, putting down his book. His manners were always good.

"I have something to say to you — something to say to you just now!"

"Something to say to me?" There was a shade of astonishment in his voice.

"Yes — but I don't quite know how to begin." She put her hand in her pocket and drew her letters out.

"I received these by the mail — take them, Maurice — keep them. Don't ever let me see them again." She pressed the unknown letters into his hands.

"What are these letters, Eloïsa?"

"I don't know," faltered the girl. "I don't

want to know — put them out of sight, Maurice. I believe they will drive me mad!" Monsieur de Sevrénac turned the envelopes over in his hand, slowly opened and read their contents.

"Do you mean to say that these — these letters are addressed to you? — to you! — my wife!"

"Maurice, do not look so astonished, I pray you! It is not my fault. I never dreamed of getting such things." She saw the dark look in the Frenchman's eyes.

"You received these impudent letters, and never told me?"

"It was to spare you — to save him — that I did not tell you, Maurice."

"To spare me! How do you spare me by this deceit? To save him! Who is he that you wish to save? Who has dared so to presume upon your talent and your work?"

"Maurice!"

"To whom have you been talking about your writings? To whom have you confided the workings of your mind? Speak, Eloïsa! I am your husband; I must know the truth."

"I pray you pardon my enthusiasm. I never realized the harm I did" —

"At this moment I ask the name of the man with whom you have become so intimate, so confiding on the subject of your work?" A ring of sarcasm sounded in his voice. Monsieur de Sevrénac trembled with anger. His eyes flashed with scorn.

"I have no intimate friends but those you have chosen for me," said Madame de Sevrénac.

"Ah — now I see it all! It is *my* friend who has so dared to insult my wife! It is *my* friend, the handsome, the charming American, who has inflicted his opinions and attentions upon you!"

"Maurice, I pray you forgive him. His letters have done no harm to me; now I have given them to you — with his thoughtlessness I pray you have patience — with me I pray you have consideration. Remember how I love my work."

"Have patience!" laughed the Frenchman. "Patience with this American in his insolence, in his audacity? How can the people of your nation be called civilized, be called Christians, be called gentlemen — when they lack all knowledge of what the words mean?"

"Because of all this — because we are Americans so must we be pardoned for our wrongs."

Madame de Sevrénac stood erect before her husband. He watched her eagerly while she spoke. He saw her bright eyes, her nervous lips. He saw that she was beautiful.

"Eloïsa," he said, "come to me." She went nearer to him. Gently he took her in his arms, gently he kissed her, gently he drove away her fears.

"If this happens again, I cannot forgive it; but now — I love you too much to cause you any sufferings, I shall forgive everything — I shall forget all."

For a time the days went quickly for Madame de Sevrènac. The weight of her secret had been taken from her mind. The brightness came back to her eyes, the happiness to her smile. She was herself again.

Enthusiastic over her writing, contented in her work. Monsieur de Sevrénac was kind and gracious in his manner. Truly he loved his wife.

Mr. Sebastian Jones had not called at the house since his last interview with the young authoress. Eloïsa missed him sometimes, but she felt they could never be on the same pleasant terms with each other again. It was better he should stay

away. Monsieur de Sevrénac was most dignified in the whole matter. The American's name never passed his lips. Madame de Sevrénac felt this and was glad of it. Fully she realized her husband's magnanimity.

But the authoress was not allowed a long season of peace. She received another of those much dreaded letters. As it lay in her hand she knew why Mr. Sebastian Jones had absented himself from the Frenchman's house.

"I despise you!" she murmured. "My husband has been too generous, too lenient in his forgiveness of your acts." Madame de Sevrénac put away the letter. She would speak to Mr. Jones herself. Perhaps she could end the matter. But Mr. Jones wisely gave her no opportunity. He did not call upon her again.

One day Madame de Sevrénac went to the Salon. She wanted to see the pictures. She asked her husband to accompany her; he promised to join her later.

The exhibition was not crowded that afternoon, and the girl had an excellent opportunity to see the paintings.

She was standing before a well-colored portrait;

she advanced a step to see the features more closely. The shadow of a man was cast before her. He raised his hat, he bowed. She started, and looking up saw Mr. Sebastian Jones at her side. In a moment she resolved how she would meet him.

"Good-afternoon," he said. He held out his hand to her.

"Good-afternoon," replied Madame de Sevrénac, keeping her hands upon her catalogue.

"You are interested in the pictures?" asked Mr. Jones, flushing, as he saw her distinct refusal of his greeting.

"I am always interested in art," said Madame de Sevrénac.

"You are alone?" asked the American.

"I am waiting for my husband." She looked straight at the young man.

"I hope he joins you soon, for I have but a few moments longer here this afternoon, and I would like to see Monsieur de Sevrénac."

"He will come shortly," said the authoress.

"You have both been quite well during my absence?"

"Quite well."

"I am glad to be in my old haunts again. I am glad to return to Paris."

"You have been away!" exclaimed Madame de Sevrénac.

"I have been to Switzerland." The American must have noticed the surprise in her face. But she controlled her expression in a moment.

"You enjoyed the mountains?"

"Greatly, thank you." Then Madam de Sevrénac moved on.

"May I accompany you?" asked Sebastian.

"As you choose."

"I have but one choice," said Sebastian. "I shall go with you. I want to hear your opinions of these paintings." He smiled at her as he spoke.

"I am a poor judge of this work," said Madame de Sevrénac.

"Because it is not your *métier*," said Sebastian, laughing.

"I would rather not discuss my work with *you*, Mr. Jones."

"You must not think that my absence has made me forgetful of your talent."

"I only wish it had made you forgetful of my talent — forgetful of me."

The color fled from Madame de Sevrénac's face. Her heart beat fast. Her breath came short.

"Why should you wish such a thing?"

"Because — because, Mr. Jones, I can bear it no longer" —

"Bear it no longer! What do you mean?"

"I mean — I mean your letters. I cannot bear your impertinence — your insolence any longer," exclaimed the girl. "I spoke to my husband — I begged your forgiveness of him. He is good, noble, and true. He forgave you, spared you!"

"He forgave me, Madame de Sevrénac, you know not what you say! He spared me!"

"Yes," gasped the girl.

"You believe that I wrote those letters? You believed that *I* sent them to tease, to torment you?"

"Mr. Jones, it is useless to deny them now."

"I do deny them. *He* must be mad. If he were before me now, loudly would I tell him this" —

"Hush!" cried the girl, "for he is coming." Monsieur de Sevrénac was looking for his wife. He paled a little when he saw her standing near the American. Perhaps he did not notice their expressions, for he came quickly forward, his hand outstretched in token of greeting.

"This is an unlooked-for pleasure."

"Sir!" cried Sebastian, white with anger.

"An unlooked-for pleasure," repeated the Frenchman, moving near his wife.

"An unlooked-for opportunity, you mean," said Sebastian. "I would like to speak a few words with you now in the presence of your wife."

"It is unsuited to Madame de Sevrénac to listen to anything you may have to say to me."

"I beg your pardon," replied the American. "What I have to say to you concerns Madame de Sevrénac."

"So be it," said the Frenchman.

"Make your apology to her — to me, sir, for what you have done!"

"For what I have done? I do not know what I have done."

"Monsieur de Sevrénac, you have written letters to your wife. You have allowed her to accuse *me* of them — to believe *me* worthy of so cowardly a trick. Well have you planned your scheme, well have you executed your actions. But your wrongs have found you out."

"Maurice," cried Madame de Sevrénac, "you wrote those letters — you deceived me?"

"Mr. Sebastian Jones says that I did." The Frenchman shrugged his shoulders with an air of unconcern; but Eloïsa saw how pale he was, and that his hands were trembling.

"Confess the truth," cried the American.

"How can I confess that of which I am innocent?"

"You can unless you are a maniac, unless you are a madman," cried Sebastian.

"I see that you are my judge," said Monsieur de Sevrénac with scorn.

"Confess that you confided in me your scheme. You exacted a promise from me to keep your secret."

"And you have proved yourself a friend indeed," said the Frenchman; "a friend who keeps his word."

"I broke my word in self-defence."

"How brave you were!" said Monsieur de Sevrénac. "And you, Eloïsa, with your foolish fancies, your morbid brain, have you been convinced of my wrongs?"

"Maurice," cried his wife, "I thought you loved me!"

"So I do — so I do," muttered the Frenchman,

as he raised his hat and left the two Americans standing side by side.

The girl stood motionless, looking after her husband's retreating figure.

"Madame de Sevrénac, it is all out now," said Sebastian, "and I am thankful for it. Day by day I watched your sufferings. Hour by hour I longed for your release. Now — now can you not begin from this moment a new, a happier life? Away from Paris, away from these memories, you will find your talent, your great ambitions, returning to you. In America we can work together — you will have a wider field, a nobler end before you in your writings."

"Don't, don't tell me these things," cried the girl. "My work is done forever. My talent has been crushed."

"It must revive again. Your work is life to you. You will be quite happy in it, I am sure. Without it your spirit will die."

"No, no, I should have no heart for anything. My duty is with him. My life is with him. My future is his. My name is his. I have promised all to him; I must live on. I must forgive all things just as I would hope for others to forgive

me, were I weak enough to yield to wrong this day."

"Can a woman love such a man? I should suppose it impossible."

"A woman must bear from her husband what she would resent from her friend. I have promised. I must accept this disappointment; it has fallen to my share."

Through the open window the sun came streaming; it fell upon the wife's pale face, upon her dark hair. She was beautiful in her nobleness, in her strength.

The American was astonished, disheartened; but the young wife had won his admiration, his respect in this — her first struggle, her first real sacrifice.

What does it matter now who wrote the letters, who inflicted the sufferings on the young wife? The object of the husband was accomplished, his end reached. The authoress lost her enthusiasm, resigned her talent, laid down her pen forever.

PAUL.

PAUL.

I KNOW not why I start to write a sketch of my own experience, a sketch of a certain period of my own life But I do so; I do so this very hour! Perhaps I am prompted to warn other young men, to give them an insight into character, into life. Be lenient with my expressions. Be lenient with my description, I pray you. I have never attempted to write for publication, for print until this day. Do I then, with this confession, with this recommendation of my weak powers, excite you to anticipate my story, to persevere with it to the end? I doubt it very much indeed.

Beginning these pages you will read carefully; you will criticise fully. I am glad of it. It is well for me so to realize the feebleness of my efforts, so to end the disappointment of my results.

But my story is short; my pages are few.

I married early in life; my wife died three

years after our union. Then my happiness ended, my loneliness began.

The child was a boy. What should I have done with a girl? After my wife died my maiden sister came to live with me. I don't quite know how she managed to do this; I am confident I never invited her. She understood as much about children as I did, which practically means having no knowledge of them whatever.

But somehow that boy grew. Somehow that boy grew to be a very fine boy. My sister declared it was her bringing up, while I inwardly decided it was mine.

We three lived together, a strange household, a strange existence. My sister was content. Paul was content. Why should I not be content also?

I went out very little. I occupied myself constantly. A physician is always busy, always active. My profession was my life.

At times my evenings dragged when my sister stitched and sewed, and sewed and stitched, and Paul was dreaming in his bed. But I knew not how to shorten, how to change them. I had plans for my boy. For myself I had none. When Paul was old enough I would exert myself for him, I

would cast myself aside in his cause, in his success. I would remember only him; I would live only for him; I would love only him. His failures would be my failures, his disappointments my disappointments, his pleasures my interests, his joys my delights. Thus I watched the boy from hour to hour; from day to day. He was affectionate in his disposition, manly in his ways. He was bright, he was happy. Sometimes he was boisterous, sometimes he was bad. I was glad of this: I do not like good children. Seldom do they turn out well. Generosity and honesty are the result of a strong mind, a healthy body. A good boy is too morose, too serious, I think. I was satisfied with Paul. I thought him handsome. I thought him clever.

Then, as the years went by, I saw he needed tuition. I saw he needed care. My sister did all she could; she lavished her money in toys, her affection in kisses for the young boy. But soon I realized her system was a failure, her idolatry a mistake. I was so much away from home in the daytime that I had scarcely the opportunity to oversee the routine, the daily life of my little boy. Celia and I talked it over one evening. The good

woman protested against strangers, teachers, and schools. "Paul is so young," she cried. "Pray, Philip, do not send him far from home." In her argument she was right. Paul should remain with us for a short time still. Then I decided the matter. Paul should have a companion, a governess. My sister, kind soul, was horrified. "You will marry her, Philip," she cried. "You will marry her before the year is out."

"I have not yet even seen her," I replied; "and since you warn me, I shall guard against your fears." Little did Celia know me. Little did she read my thoughts.

I advertised. I waited daily for the governess. "The most foolish plan I could devise. I should have private recommendations. It would never do to advertise!" But I knew best. I wanted no reduced lady, no touchy person to destroy my home. I wanted a good teacher, a good companion for my child.

At length the answer came. I made the appointment by letter with the governess. Her style, her writing, her expressions had pleased me. It was quite unnecessary that I should see if she were tall or short, plain or beautiful.

On Monday she arrived. I waited in my office for her name to be announced.

Paul came and begged that he might sit quite still and see his governess. The boy was seated near me in the large leather-cushioned chair. His bright curls shone like golden threads in the morning light, his eyes beamed like precious stones of deep blue color. I had given him a book and bade him read in silence. It was against my rule that he should come into my office at those hours.

A ring of the front bell, a question, a name, and Mademoiselle Baron stood before me.

I spoke but little French. I was glad to hear the girl speak English. Was she beautiful? No. Was she plain? No. She was interesting. I found myself watching her face, her features, her gestures, her movements. She smiled pleasantly at the boy. He rose, at my prompting, and stood with his small hand stretched out to greet her. She spoke to him in her own tongue, but Paul remained silent. "My son speaks only English," I said, "but I wish him to learn French. I wish him to speak it well." The girl raised her eyes and looked at me.

"He is so young, he will soon learn," she said.

"Children are easier to teach than grown people,"I replied, smiling. Then I rang for my servant. He led the way up-stairs for the governess. As I resumed my work, I wrote with difficulty. I was inwardly going over in my mind my sister's first interview with the young stranger. Celia won't like her; Celia won't approve of her, I thought. She is too young, too attractive for this household. I can swear to that. I laughed to myself. I enjoyed the joke; I enjoyed the whole incident greatly. The next governess Celia will insist on engaging. But there won't be a next one. I shall keep this one. I shall keep this one if I can.

I went out soon after to my duties, and in the rush of business, in the excitement of cases, I forgot the governess.

It was not until my return that evening I realized she was in my house, she was the companion to my boy.

Already they seemed friendly, already they seemed on good terms.

My sister was very silent through dinner, very busy after it. We sat around the large, old-

fashioned fireplace in the hall. Paul was flushed, excited; he brought all his books and toys to show them to his governess. She laughed at his enthusiasm, she laughed at his childish joy. "He will be awake all night," said his aunt crossly. His aunt was right, no doubt. The stranger did not look annoyed. She bore the criticism well. The girl was young, but she had refinement, she had tact. After a while, as Paul went off to bed, he kissed his aunt, he raised his head to kiss the governess; her face flushed, as she bent down over his fair locks and gently stroked them with her hands.

"Good-night," she murmured, "good-night." I put my arms around my boy and pressed him to my heart.

"Quickly to bed," I said; "you are up late; hurry all you can." The boy laughed and said he had had a splendid time all day. Then I watched him going slowly up the stairs to his own room. I watched his little figure until it disappeared from sight.

Celia stayed up later than usual that night. She wanted to chaperon the governess, I saw. Mademoiselle Baron worked at a piece of em-

broidery. I noticed the dexterous movement of her fingers, the quick succession of her stitches.

"You sew very neatly," said my sister. "Will you let me see your work?" She rose and stood before Celia. "Do you find it difficult?" she questioned.

"I learned to embroider long ago, so it is easy to me."

"You are fond of sewing?"

"Not plain sewing," said the girl.

The next day my sister rose early. She asked me if I knew the governess was called Kathleen. I replied that I had not questioned her upon her Christian name.

"I shall call her Kate," declared my sister. "I never could tolerate those fancy names." So Kate she was called, and Kate she remained.

The weeks wore on. I was very busy, very active in my work.

It was pleasant to come home to a good dinner, a bright fire, a young companion. I began to realize the change.

One day my sister tried to question me about my plans, my future — and the governess.

"Do you intend to marry her?" she asked.

I flushed; my face was red with anger.

"Marry her?" I cried. "Why should I marry her?"

"Because you are in love with her," said my sister promptly. I bit my lips.

"In love with her?" I murmured. "It cannot be."

It had been my custom to go often to the opera, often to a concert when the music was good. I went much more frequently before the governess came.

Now I found my fireside pleasant, my home sufficient. Kate would sit near me, her eyes watching my child, her arms caressing my boy. She was very tender, very kind. Sometimes I would wonder if she were quite happy, if she always meant to stay. The question was annoying. I put it quickly from me. The girl seemed at ease, content in the strange, old-fashioned home. Then Paul was studying well, learning quickly, she said. When I looked at my sister I was thankful. I was relieved. In spite of all her fears she liked the governess. I complimented myself on our good-fortune, on my good judgment in the matter. If the governess were young, she proved well fitted to her place.

In my profession I had often many articles to write. It occurred to me to ask the governess to copy some of them. She seemed delighted at the plan. So, after Paul had gone to bed and left our family party, Kate would sit at the table near my sister and copy out my work. She wrote neatly in English. With few mistakes could produce her papers for my inspection. She was almost too diligent, I thought.

One night I offered her tickets for a concert, begging her to take some friends and go. She laughed and said she did not want to neglect her duty and my work. In vain I pleaded with her. At length I thought I had almost persuaded her, when my sister joined in her voice and said, "If Miss Kate prefers her duty, Philip, of course she knows best. You should not urge her so to go." But Kate did not intend to yield; I saw it by her manner. I liked her determination, I liked her character.

I was confident of her strength, sure of her judgment. She was the proper companion for my boy.

One evening, as we worked over my articles, I raised my head suddenly from my writing to find

Mademoiselle Baron watching me. She colored as her eyes met mine. Again she bent her gaze upon her papers. I thought her very charming, very taking in her shyness, in her maiden ways. Later, when my sister left the room, she pushed her writings over to me.

"Are they quite correct?" she asked.

"You have made some mistake just here," I replied, reading the sentence in fault over to her. I wondered at her embarrassment, at her nervousness. I looked into her face; at a glance, I saw her heart was beating fast. I felt she had something to say to me; something I dreaded much to hear. She was dissatisfied! But she only spoke about my work. I saw she changed her mind. I looked at her young face, her bright eyes, her soft hair. I admired her truly. It was then like a sudden inspiration, a sudden longing, I chanced to speak to her, to confide in her.

"Mademoiselle" I began.

"Yes," she replied, throwing back her head and brushing the stray locks from her forehead.

"I wonder if you will allow me to tell you something?" She laughed and moved her pen to her other hand. I saw she was embarrassed. At

first I had not thought her shy. But of late it had increased upon her. "Do you give me permission?" I continued, as I found she remained silent. She nodded and turned her chair near the fire. I handed her a screen to shield her eyes from the blaze.

"Mademoiselle," said I, "what I have to say will be a matter of a few words. As you already know, it is some years since my wife died. She left a son, — a son for me to love, to cherish. I have done my duty towards my charge as best I can, and you have helped me, helped me very well. About twelve months ago, before I ever heard of you, before you ever heard of me, I was called in consultation to see a gifted singer, a beautiful woman, a widow. I thought all dreams of love had passed forever from me, but this gifted woman, this successful singer, filled my heart. I saw her again and again in a professional way. I saw her many times. After my intercourse with this woman I would return to my lonely fireside, to my empty home, oppressed and desolate. Our conversations, our meetings, became the greatest interests of the days. She is beautiful, she is clever.

"I asked her to marry me. I gave her a ring. We are engaged. The months go on, the time is passing fast. Our wedding has never yet been fixed. When I go to see her now, I feel worried, I feel ashamed. How can we arrange our marriage? How can I bring a singer home to live with my sister, to live with my boy?" In my enthusiasm, in my earnestness, I drew nearer to the governess. She spoke brokenly; she spoke slowly in answer to the question.

"In what way have your surroundings changed in the twelve months?" she asked. "Your sister is the same, your boy is the same."

"It must be I; it must be I who have changed. I who see things differently," I cried. "What shall I do? What can a man do when his word is in question?"

"He can abide by it, abide by it to the end."

"Paul is growing older," I exclaimed. "Paul needs careful watching, careful teaching."

"Is this woman then so ordinary?" asked the governess.

"She is a public character. She is a singer," I said.

"When you engaged yourself to her was she not a singer just the same?"

"Yes." I turned bitterly away. I looked with disappointment, with almost anger, at the fair young face beside the fire. "You are too precise, too particular in your reasoning," I said. "You cannot, you do not, understand."

"You asked my opinion; I give it to you," replied the girl. I watched her: how pale her face looked in spite of the brightness of the fire!

"Mademoiselle," — I went up to her, I took her hands in mine, — "do tell me honestly what you would wish to have me do?" She lowered her eyes, she trembled.

"As a gentleman, you should marry the woman to whom you are engaged."

"Even if I do not love her?"

"You loved her once; that should suffice."

"It does not," I said; "far from it."

"You should have confessed to her before now, if you did not mean to bring her here — if you were ashamed to have her meet your sister, ashamed to have her love your boy."

"My sister never dreams of such a thing. A singer as my wife! The mere idea would frighten her! I was infatuated! I was mad!"

"Paul is a noble child, a child with kindly ways. If you try while he is still young, he may learn to love your second wife." Kate rose from her chair. Bitterly the words sounded, deeply the wound was touched.

"My wife!" I cried; "there is but one woman who can be my wife; you are that woman." Then I stopped; I did not mean to say it. Mademoiselle Baron was very pale; she moved away. As she stood by the table arranging her papers her hands shook. She was cold; she was proud. How well I knew it!

"I shall finish these pages to-morrow," she said. I held out my hand. I wanted her forgiveness.

"Do not think hardly of me," I said; "a man cannot always remain silent. Do not look back upon this conversation. Forget it, forget it if you can." For a moment she glanced at me.

"I am sure, when you come to think it all over, you will be guided by what is honorable, by what is right," she said.

Then with a sudden movement she turned from me and went quickly from the room.

After she had gone I stood before the dying fire. In those flames I saw my cherished dreams

burn out; I saw my brightest hopes turn to lifeless ashes in the grate. This girl, this governess, if things had happened otherwise, might have been my promised wife, might have been forever the teacher of my child.

Just then my sister joined me and broke in upon my reflections. I was glad to change the current of my thought.

"Philip," she began, "you have been saying something to that governess to-night. You may as well confess it; you need not try to hide anything from me."

"My dear sister," said I, "it would be as wise in you, and much better for me, if you would dismiss this governess from your mind."

"Philip, I am astonished. It is impossible to deny my words. You have made that governess unhappy. I have noticed her of late. She has lost her spirit and her cheerfulness. Just now, in passing by her door, I heard her sobbing piteously in the refuge of the dark. That governess has something on her mind."

"Nonsense!" I replied, angry at my sister's interference, angry at the justice of her words. "Mademoiselle Baron is not unhappy. She has

never seemed more bright. But while we are discussing the subject, Celia, I would like you to understand once and forever that I shall never marry Kate." There was decision in my manner, determination in my face.

The next morning I saw no traces of Kate's tears. She looked happy and content. I was much relieved. I always feared she might decide to leave her place.

But well founded were my fears. After breakfast she begged to speak with me a moment and alone.

I took her into my office. She stood before me just as she had done the first day I heard her voice, the first hour I saw her face. Well I remembered the interest which had awakened in me for the young governess. Our interview was soon ended. In vain I pleaded with her to reconsider her decision, to remain in my house. But her mind was quite decided. I argued I would be much away from home. My presence would trouble her but little in the months to come. She would not change her mind. I suppose my confidences had alarmed her, my words had frightened her. It was with a weary spirit, a sad

heart, I went out to my calls that morning. Kate going away! Kate leaving us forever!

The next two days went quickly. On the third morning the governess had gone.

Again we began the slow routine of life, again the mornings turned to afternoons, the evenings into nights — and Kate had really gone. Paul seemed much changed by her absence. My sister and I tried our best to cheer the little fellow. He talked all day awake, he dreamed all night asleep, of Mademoiselle Baron.

Celia proposed another governess. I scorned the idea. How find a substitute for cold, proud Kate? But soon I saw that Paul needed the constant companionship, the unceasing care. So we sent him off to school.

It was about this time I received a short note from my *fiancée*. She returned my letters, she broke our engagement. I knew I had been lacking in my visits, in my attentions to her. But were there not great excuses for me? Had I not many things to occupy my thoughts just then?

I was relieved. My heart was full of thankfulness. The engagement at an end! The ring — the stone was opal — she had kept. I had

no superstitions, but I wondered sometimes why she kept my ring. It was of an unusual brilliancy, an unusual color. No doubt she prized its value.

Thus my days sped on. I worked in the evenings constantly, while my sister sat before the fire. Paul was far away; the governess gone forever. Sadly I thought of my separation from my boy; sadly I thought of my separation from my friend. In vain I looked for traces of Mademoiselle Baron. In vain I searched the papers for her name. The name of the singer I would sometimes see in the foreign notes, for she had long since left my country. My thoughts dwelt not in the present, not in the future, but in the past. The happy past! Once my sister spoke of Kate. She praised her talents, she praised her ways. How strange that every one loved Kate! I blamed myself for allowing her to go. I blamed myself for speaking as I did. The proud girl had never thought of me: I was confident she had not.

The holidays came; Paul was at home. The holidays passed; Paul had gone again.

The years went on. I thought with pride of my handsome son; he was no longer a child, but

a man. He was all I could desire; he was all I could wish — tall and handsome, manly and clever, honest and true. But his interests were away from his aunt, away from me. His college, his chums, his sports, became his life.

I began to realize how changed I was, how old I had grown. The enthusiasm seemed to be dying, the strength weakening in my ardent spirit. I was too much alone, too much narrowed in my private life. I blessed my education, I blessed my profession. Without those tools to form my interests, I would have been hopeless, I would have been lost indeed.

Paul's letters were always bright, always enthusiastic. How it gladdened my heart to think my son was happy!

One evening in the spring my sister came home tired. I asked her if she had been out too long, if she had walked too far. She said her day had been fatiguing with its interests, its cares. I laughed. These charitable organizations are the torment of men's lives. Their sisters, their cousins, come home worn out with meetings, exhausted with committee work. But my sister closed her ears to these arguments of mine. She

was the chairwoman, the secretary, the president, of numerous auxiliaries, she said. So I looked on in silence.

"Philip," began the good woman, "Philip, I have seen Paul's governess to-day."

"You have seen Paul's governess?" I cried.

"She passed me quickly in the street."

"And you did not stop her?"

"How could I? She did not give me time."

"Celia, how could you be so stupid?"

"Stupid!"

"Yes; you knew I wanted to see the girl. These years I have searched for her in vain."

"You never told me you were looking for her. I thought you never cared for the governess."

"Celia!" I protested. "How can you torment me so?"

"If I had known your anxiety about her whereabouts, I might have rushed after her through the crowded streets."

"How was she dressed?" I asked.

"In mourning."

"In mourning? I suppose some one belonging to her must have died."

"You need not look so concerned," said my

sister: "as we never knew any of her relations, their death need not worry us."

"I know; but I should hate to think of her in sorrow. Did you think her changed, Celia? Did she look much older?" I asked.

"She looked older, of course; we all look older. Think how Paul has grown since she was here."

I thought of the white hairs which had come to me, and I was silent.

"Philip," continued my sister, "as you have manifested this interest in the governess, I will tell you that she was walking with a friend of mine. No doubt as companion to her."

"Celia! You then can find her whereabouts for me?"

"You really want to see her?"

"I really want to see her," I replied, flushing deeply.

So it happened that my sister gave me the long-hoped for opportunity. I saw Kate. I went to call upon her with my sister. She was changed, she was older. Her black dress made her face look thin and pale. But to me she was Kate, proud Kate. After I had left her, the brief few minutes in her presence seemed like a dream. I

wondered if she could have known I was unmarried. If, as I talked to her, she could have thought the singer was my wife. The conversation had been principally about Paul. Her face flushed as she spoke of him. Celia had been very kind in her manner. But she had always a tender spot in her heart for Kate.

On our return home Celia told me she had invited the governess to dinner the next evening. "I told her to bring her embroidery, and sit by the lamp with me, in memory of the old times." How kind my sister was!

When the next day dawned, I could scarcely wait for afternoon; the hours had never seemed so long.

At length dinner was ready, Kate was in the house; again at our table, again in our home. How strange it was to think of the days and weeks and months which had worn themselves away since she had gone from us! The conversation was difficult; we all felt embarrassed. Paul became again the subject of our remarks.

Later, as we sat around the lamp, my sister sewing, Kate embroidering, and I hard at work, with a rush it came over me, with a pain at my

heart, I realized that Kate could not remain always. I wondered what she thought of my broken engagement. For I supposed she had guessed the truth. But she had too much tact to express one word, even by a glance. I listened to her voice as I heard her speaking to my sister.

"I am grieved to see you in mourning," Celia remarked.

"I have lost my mother," the governess replied. She bent her eyes upon her work.

"I am very sorry," said my sister. "Was she ill long?"

"Only a short time."

"To lose your mother is indeed a sorrow."

"She was not my own mother, who died when I was born. This was my step-mother."

"Ah! Your step-mother; that is a different matter," said my sister. Then they remained silent. Swiftly the girl's needle flew, swiftly her fingers moved over the embroidery. Celia went up-stairs to get another piece of sewing; we two were left alone. As I watched Kate from my writing, I saw the fingers on her right hand move. My eyes fell upon her ring — an opal ring. Quickly I rose, eagerly I stood before her.

"You are fond of jewelry?" I asked, pointing to her hand.

She flushed crimson. "No; I have only worn this since my step-mother died."

"Since your step-mother died?" I repeated.

"She gave it into my care, into my keeping."

I bent my head. I looked into the blanched face.

"Do you know whose ring that is?" I asked.

"Yes," said the governess. I bit my lips; my face reddened in the fear of what was coming.

"Mademoiselle Baron," I said, "is it possible? Could such a dreadful thing be true? Was the woman I had promised to marry your—your step-mother?"

The governess raised her eyes.

"She was my step-mother. You knew her only by her public name," she replied. "And now, though you should hate me, despise me, when I tell you all, I am glad to speak the truth." The governess stood up before me. I saw the opal flickering its lights on her hand.

"If I speak, you must hear me to the end." I bowed my head. "When I came here to be the governess to your boy, I came at *her* bidding, I

came at *her* command. I knew your history, long before you told me anything. I knew you had promised to marry her. I saw the engagement was a secret, I saw the mistake that you had made. She cared for you. She wanted to leave the stage; she wished to be your wife. It was my promise to her which brought me to your house; my duty to you which drove me from it. Your engagement was broken because I used my influence, I used my power, to help you, to spare your sister, to save your boy."

"You knew all this! Thus you kept your counsel, played your game, practised your deceit." She looked at me scornfully.

"Take this," she said. She drew the ring off her finger and put it in my hand. "It is yours," she went on; "the ring is yours, but the secret of your engagement is mine forever." She laughed at my embarrassment, she laughed at my fear.

"We share the secret," she said; "you must never deny that."

I saw my sister coming down the stairs; the governess must have seen her too, for she resumed her work, she regained her composure.

Kate went home early. She had to be in at a

certain hour, she said. I did not regret her departure. I was relieved when the door closed behind her, and I remained on the inside.

My sister went soon to bed. I sat up far into the night: I thought over many things. The ring I took from my pocket. I opened wide my window and thrust it into the dark streets. "Good-by, good-by, ye memories, forever."

When Paul came home that summer I had many happy days. I had recovered from my shocks, and tried my best to entertain my son. I told him I had seen his governess. He laughed and said he did not think he would recognize her now. "Of the two you have changed the most," I said.

Paul was anxious to take a trip abroad. It was reluctantly I assented to accompany him.

We travelled through the principal French towns and crossed into Switzerland.

One night Paul came home in high spirits. He had been on an excursion with some Englishmen.

"Father, whom do you suppose I met?" he asked. I shook my head. I had grown too old to care for these surprises.

"I met my governess!" My heart beat fast.

"How did you recognize her?" I asked.

"Oh, I asked who she was. I thought her face so interesting. At first I did not understand, but there must have been something mutual about the recognition, for she spoke to me."

"She knew you!" I exclaimed.

"She heard the men call me by name."

"Did she say she was coming in this direction?" I asked.

"No; she went the other route, the opposite way."

How like her, I thought, how like Kate!

"Father," continued Paul, "he is quite a nice-looking chap."

"Who?" I asked absently.

"Her husband. The governess is married, you know." As he spoke Paul sauntered off. I heard him talking with his friends. Their merry laughter reached my ears. I bowed my head: the joyous sounds did but mock me. A lump rose to my throat, a sob burst from me.

"My boy, my boy, you do not understand. You will never know it was you who broke the news to me, you who thrust the sting into my heart."

A MODERN ACTRESS.

A MODERN ACTRESS.

TRY to make a correct description of your neighbor, your friend. How much more difficult would you find it to describe yourself! your appearance, your character, your disposition: they are safe in your own hands, in your own keeping, no doubt; but turn these virtues, these faults, over to another's care. What then? The judgment of your idols will be a surprise, a revelation to you.

I, Edward Lynton, 2d, now find myself in this predicament. To paint my own character, my own appearance, is not an easy matter. I would, at this moment, hand my task over to my neighbor, — friend or foe whoever he may be.

A society man. What do the words imply? A fool? Nay, but a wise man, — a man who is proud of his birth, his position, his name.

Born in lace, reared in luxury, surrounded

always by New York's fashion, New York's culture — with whom would I change? I trow with no one dead, with no one living. Handsome? Yes. I have heard it said of me.

I began my social career at an early age. Money in my pockets, money in my bank, money everywhere. No want of mine could exhaust my funds. Where shall I put it? Upon whom shall I spend it? became my constant question, my unceasing cry.

My horses were fast, my turnouts stylish — the most costly in that dashing New York set.

I was present at every private entertainment, every public gathering. I became a well-known figure, a conspicuous character, on the avenue and in the park.

Thus my days went by quickly, my years began to multiply swiftly.

At thirty I tired of horses and soon interested myself in literature and art. I had been to many theatres; I had seen actresses in many parts.

The stage must be elevated, improved, I thought. I longed for an opportunity to interest myself in its plays, its players. But it was in vain I waited for the subject — the woman to imper-

sonate my idea, to carry out my scheme. At no performance could I find her, in no house did she appear. Was the world bereft of this particular type of woman? Was there no actress to paint the writer's dream, to climb the heights of the stage's possibilities?

When pathos is shown by real tears, when joys are depicted by real enthusiasm, when players live their parts with firm beliefs, with great conceptions, — then, and only then, shall our actors rise to fame, our stage to art.

Within myself I argued, I reasoned, of the laurels awaiting a talented woman, a dramatic genius. To act was a high ambition, a great career. I could appreciate the fulness of it. I could criticise others — I could tell in what they failed, in what they excelled; I could speak of them easily, write of them fluently — but for my own talents I could find no description, give no name. To act was indeed beyond, above me. I had once such a dream; long since had I awakened from it. My social standing alone became my judge, my adviser. To carry out my desire I must renounce New York society — the society in whose praises I had so often basked, in whose

circles my money had so often jingled. My father, a proud, stern man, declined to hear of my project. "Go upon the stage, but it shall be penniless!" he cried. "In taking such a step, I would consider you beneath my notice, my recognition. No actor shall bear my father's honored name."

Angry, disappointed, I saw the folly of pressing my dear project, my beloved dream.

Still, I interested myself in plays and players. I became intimate with the different managers; I frequented their houses.

I discussed the possibilities of a great actress, the impossibilities of a poor one. Such talent as I searched for was hidden behind the curtains of pride, of aristocracy even. Real talent, real refinement, real beauty, real grace, where should we find them? On what stage would they allow themselves to appear? There is something lacking in the greatest actresses; how difficult to point out what that something is! You find it in the women in your ballrooms, in the women in your houses; but it seems to vanish with those behind the footlights on the stage.

One winter's night I trudged along the streets

of New York. The winds were high, the snow deep. I closed tightly my warm scarf, my heavy coat. I pressed my hands down into my protecting pockets. I began to wish myself at home.

Soon I came in sight of a theatre. The lights were flaring, the late-comers going in. I stopped. I glanced a moment at the play-bills. I consulted my watch: an hour of the play was already over. I entered the crowded house. I procured a seat within a few feet of the stage. I could see that the piece ran smoothly, but I was not much interested in watching the actors in their parts. The star appeared. Clapping of hands greeted her. She was too large, I thought; too heavy in her movements; they lacked ease and grace. Then the second character entered — the character of a young and beautiful girl. Her strong face, her peculiar eyes, seemed to haunt me in their earnest gaze. It was a difficult part; she had conceived it well. "An actress!" I murmured; "an actress, indeed!" Her young face was pale and colorless, quite unlike most women of the type. Her pose was good, her figure fine. If you were the heroine of this play, then people might well flock to note your beauty and your grace.

Just then she turned her face. I saw the strange light in her eyes; they were of a deep color, more green than blue. I wondered if she were ambitious.

Before leaving the theatre that night I learned her name. *Brown!* How dreadful! how commonplace! thought I.

But through the following hours, far into the dawn, I pictured visions of the rise, the success, of the young actress, Miss Ann Brown! It was I who would bring her into notice. I who would cause her to be crowned with honors and with fame. I would make her career my special charge. I would begin at once to arrange for her new studies, her new parts. She would work hard and diligently through the spring and summer. It was a great plan, a brilliant scheme; my mind was soon absorbed in it.

I made the necessary inquiries concerning Miss Brown, and I obtained a letter of introduction from her manager to her father. She lived in a side street near Fourth Avenue. I called at the house the next afternoon. The Browns were out. I waited two days before repeating my visit.

This time fortune favored me,—I met the

actress upon her own steps. I raised my hat; I begged pardon. She flushed deeply, murmured a few words which I did not understand. "I have come," said I, with an attempt at boldness which was rendered difficult by an unexpected glance from the actress, "with a letter of introduction."

"To my father?"

"Yes," said I. "I hope he is at home."

"He went out an hour ago with me. He returns early to dinner." Just then the door was opened and Miss Brown walked in.

"Will you wait for him?" she said.

"Yes, if you please," I answered, at a loss for words. We went quickly through a narrow entry, and up a long flight of stairs. The actress turned to a door on the right, opened it, and motioned me to follow her. It was a cheerful parlor, well-furnished and comfortable. I felt embarrassed. I had hoped to find a poorer establishment and a less well-to-do person in Miss Brown.

She pointed to a chair near the fire.

"You will find that comfortable," she said. Moving to the chair, I stood before it while she walked about the room. Her grace was fascinat-

ing, her movements enchanting. She went to the lamps and lighted them. A glow was cast upon her pale face, her white brow.

"It is pleasant to find warmth and shelter," said I, "on so cold a day as this."

"Yes, we have had many storms and winds this winter. I often find New York too cold."

"Why do you remain here then?"

"My work keeps me."

"Do you find your occupation tedious?" I ventured.

"Oh, no. Sometimes I would like to remain at home. But then, you see, I can't."

"Do you then enjoy your studies?" I continued.

"The repetition is tiresome."

"You should have change."

"How can I have it?" laughed the girl.

"A plan might be devised."

"Father says I am too impatient with my parts."

"Your father is quite right. He knows your ability, your talent." She laughed again a little bitterly, I thought.

"And what if I have no talent?" she said; then drew her chair nearer the fire, and rested her chin upon her slender hands before the hot blaze. She looked very beautiful in her plain gown, her cheap hat.

"I can see it in your face," I replied. "What you need is study; experience to bring your talents out." She shook her head; her green eyes widened, then shrank again behind the dark lashes that fell upon her cheeks.

"What would experience do for me?"

"A great deal, I think, in your theatrical life."

"Experience means wickedness and vice."

"No," I cried. "You are wrong, quite wrong. Have no such thought. Experience would make you wiser, happier. I am sure of that." She looked straight at me.

"You are joking," she said. I bent nearer to her. I know not why I did so, it was the impulse of the moment.

"I have never been more earnest in my life. But trust in me, Miss Brown. I do assure you, the life you lead just now is narrowed. If you rise in your profession, you will learn much

that is good, much that is true." She took off her hat. She ran her long fingers through her short black hair.

"I cannot believe you," she said. Then hearing a step outside, she rose and opened the door for her father.

He was a tall, stately old man. I could at a glance see the remains of his beauty. He held out his hand to me with a certain hesitation, certain simplicity.

"You want to see me?" he asked.

"Yes," I replied, rising and handing him the letter.

"Sit right down again, sir, while I take off my coat and gloves." His daughter came forward, but did not put out her hand to help the old man in his struggle to disengage his cuffs and sleeves. I offered my assistance, but she bounded forward, and throwing me a defiant glance, seized her father's arm and nearly broke it, in her quick determination to free the coat from his trembling grasp.

Then she turned away quickly.

"I will leave you," she said. Her manner was curt to rudeness. It was quite useless to extend

my hand for good-by ; she did not mean to notice me again.

I was disappointed. I found it difficult to begin my conversation with the old man. "Mr. Brown," said I, "I have come here on what may seem an extraordinary errand. I went to the theatre a few nights ago ; I noticed your daughter on the stage." I waited for Mr. Brown to answer, but he only nodded his head. I thought his eyes brightened as I continued. "Perhaps you can help me in my scheme."

"Yes, yes," he said.

"I want to make a proposition to you." He leaned forward and his bright eyes met mine. "I want your help, Mr. Brown."

"Yes, yes," he repeated.

"Your daughter, with whom I have just had a few moments' conversation, has not her full rights in her present position on the stage."

Mr. Brown leaned back in his chair, his face looked worn and haggard.

"What is your proposition ?" he said.

"That your daughter shall study for a higher part." He passed his hands over his knees and then answered, —

"It is impossible."

"Why impossible?"

"Money is needed." I coughed uneasily.

"Mr. Brown, I am a complete stranger to you. My father is Mr. Edward Lynton. I am his only son. I have taken the liberty of calling upon you solely on account of the interest which I feel in the success of your daughter."

"Such attentions are not unusual with gentlemen where the career of an actress is concerned," he replied; "but my daughter is proud; impossible. I would advise you to let the matter alone."

I coughed again.

"If I am really interested in her welfare, which I am, I cannot so easily set aside my plan."

"You might, sir, be disappointed if you did help her." I felt disappointed already.

"We might help her together," I replied, my mind wandering far away from the small parlor and the old man. I saw the actress upon the stage; I heard the noise of her success; the people were applauding her talent, her acting.

"What, then, is your idea?" I roused myself to speak.

"To have her study regularly for a new play,

that she may take a first part." The father laughed.

"She is a handsome lass, there's no doubt of that, sir; but you don't know her — you don't know her half."

"I could not expect to know her on so short an acquaintance," I said. I was annoyed with the old man. He was so confident in his opinion of the handsome girl. But there was much to admire in his simplicity, his truth. I could already judge that Miss Brown's character was strong, her disposition difficult. Born in a higher station of life, would she not have been a great lady? A charming woman of society?

"She will succeed, I am confident of it," I said. Mr. Brown cleared his throat and then answered, —

"I have had charge of the girl since her mother died. She was a gentle, good child. I had no fault to find.

"I was unfortunate in business. I lost the greater part of my income. Too old was I, then, to begin life over again. I found my child would have to work for her support. She was strong and able to undertake her task. When still very young I put her upon the stage. She had a fair

education. At first, I did not realize the hardships of such a life. I see it all now — to-day, when it is too late. Hers has been a dark, a tedious journey."

"Her beauty should have been remarked," said I.

"It was, it was," replied the old man.

"Then why did she not succeed?"

"Ann's interest in her studies seemed to flag. Her ambition carried her to the second parts, in which you now find her, no farther."

"Did she not have good stage training?" I asked.

"Yes, yes. But it has not improved her. Her life is a mistake, a failure."

"Her life has only just begun," I cried.

"Even so, I fear it will be hard to change my girl now."

"She must succeed," I said. I rose to my feet, I walked a few steps back and forth before the old man. He seemed feebler to me than I had at first supposed.

"Mr. Brown," I exclaimed, "let me pay the needed money. The manager of New York's best theatre is my friend. I shall bring your daughter

to his notice. In a year's time, sooner, Miss Brown shall be New York's great star." I held out my hand; the old man grasped it. We were friends, real friends. I felt confident of our success. Before leaving I arranged to call again the next day, Mr. Brown promising to inform his daughter of our plans.

"It must be slowly, carefully done," he murmured. I laughed and wished him good luck.

"Good-by! Great success!" said I with a wave of my hand and a vain attempt at hilarity.

"Good-by! good-by!" repeated the old man. He looked absently at me.

That night I went again to the theatre. My seat was in a poorer position in the house, but I managed to see Miss Brown as she came upon the stage. She walked with a firm and almost too decided tread in going through her parts. She did not seem to pay sufficient heed to the movements of her fellow-actors. Her face looked flushed; her green eyes wide and searching in their nervous, restless gaze. Several times she scanned the audience, — a fault so common with actresses. I have often deplored it. After a while I concluded she was looking for her father. I

learned later that he was not in the audience that evening. He waited outside for his daughter.

I went home early. I made no attempt to speak with Miss Brown. I was disappointed with her acting that night.

The next afternoon I was at the house near Fourth Avenue. The servant led me up the stairs and to the room on the right. There was no one present as I entered. Hat in hand, I stood. I waited five minutes — twenty minutes. I grew impatient. Then the door beyond opened, and Miss Brown walked in. She came quickly across the room, and, standing in front of me, gazed at me strangely. I held out my hand. She grasped it with her long fingers, then rapidly withdrew them, and stood still with her arms folded behind her.

"Good-afternoon, Miss Brown," said I.

"Good-afternoon," she replied.

"I must beg a few moments of your time. I have come to speak with you upon a purely business matter."

"Purely business matter."

"Your father has told you of it," I continued.

"Father told me a great many things after you

went away yesterday. I did not believe a word he said." She walked to the sofa and sat down upon the cushioned arm in a strictly Bohemian fashion.

"Have you then so little faith in him?" I asked.

"Very, very little, while in you I have none." This frank admission startled me. I wished myself gone.

"In time your faith may strengthen," I managed to say.

"When?"

"Miss Brown," said I, "we must speak seriously. Did your father make my proposition clear to you?"

"He said you wanted to give me money. I think you have mistaken me for some of your more fashionable friends." A look of disdain, contempt, came into the green eyes, and about the corners of the beautiful mouth. Such anger was becoming.

"I think it is you, Miss Brown, who have mistaken my fashionable friends." I went nearer to her. "Miss Brown," I continued, I spoke more kindly, "I have simply offered to lend the money

to your father, in order that you may perfect your talents, and become a good actress."

"I prefer remaining a poor one, thank you."

"But can you not see the folly of wasting your time upon these secondary parts?"

"I like them."

"Have you no ambition?"

"None." Astonished, vexed, I turned away. Just then through the mirror I could see the great eyes watching me; they seemed to pierce my very thoughts. I wheeled around suddenly, but the actress had been too quick for me. Her face was in a brilliant smile.

"If I should decide to accept this money, what do you require of me?" she asked.

"Nothing but perseverance and work." She knit her brows.

"Then I need not fear the bargain?" She looked straight at me.

"Not in the least. Your studies alone shall command you."

"Study is no pleasure."

"That is true in many cases. But once interested in your new pursuits, you will find pleasure even in the tediousness of your labor."

"I consent to your offer," she said. She was twisting the sofa fringe into a tight knot as she spoke.

"Very good," I answered; "and I would advise you to resign your present *rôle* at once. Next week you can go with your father to a quiet place. Away from the city you can apply yourself more thoroughly."

"I would prefer"— Then she stopped, and began to untwist the fringe.

"What would you prefer?" I asked.

"A place near the sea."

"I am glad to know your wish. To-morrow I shall consult with my friend; he can give us his advice. If you will kindly consent to accept whatever play and part he chooses for you, it will simplify matters."

"I have preferences."

"What young woman has not?" I replied.

Then we shook hands for good-by.

I went out, leaving my respects for Mr. Brown.

The next morning I had a long, satisfactory talk with the manager. He advised hard study. He said he would see Miss Brown within the

week; he kept his word. At length everything was arranged.

Old Mr. Brown and his beautiful daughter went to the City-by-the-Sea. Thus my influence had already told upon the career of the young actress.

The old man wrote to tell me of their arrival.

They had a small, comfortably furnished cottage on an unfrequented road. The road stretched along by the bay. The bay led out into the sea.

Here Miss Brown began her studies; she was in earnest now.

Nearly every week I heard of her improvement. The good, pure air was very strengthening to them both.

All went well. One day I thought of going to the little cottage and taking them by surprise. I travelled by boat from New York.

Mr. Brown was delighted at the unexpected visit; his daughter, too, was pleased. The actress and I spent those days together. We took long walks across the country, returning by the walk along the cliff. The girl was vigorous and strong.

I asked her if she missed her city life with its excitements and crowd. She glanced at me with her queer eyes, then said, —

"Now I am more satisfied."

"You think you will learn to love your art?" I questioned.

"Success might make it dear to me," she said; "but now I do not love to study even for my art."

I was annoyed; I wanted my actress to succeed.

"You must not allow yourself to be disappointed at first," I said.

"No, no," she laughed; "I still have moments when I like to work. But sometimes it is so difficult to struggle on."

"I suppose it is," I replied vaguely. My wants having ever been gratified, it was only through her I learned the meaning of the word effort — effort for our own ambitions which we love, we value. For the moment I thought I knew what it was to despair; then in an instant the old longing came back to me. In becoming an actor, my life would indeed be full complete. I envied the girl as I watched her; I yearned for the fulfilment of my own cherished dreams.

"It is not as if I had never tried," she went

on. "Father used to think me careless and idle, but I was not. I settled down to my failures; but it took determination to do it. I went on as if I were satisfied like the actresses were who succeeded."

"There is such a thing as bearing failure bravely," I said. "Perhaps you deserved more credit than if you had gone on hoping just the same; the noblest characters arise from struggling, not from success."

"But I think it was my envy of others which made me hard and cold. The actresses I had expected to surpass soon rose far above me in their theatrical career. I did not know how to push forward."

"How few in the world do!" I answered. "But are you hard and cold, child? I should not have thought it." She flushed and bit her lips; I saw I had displeased her. She moved a step away from me, and, stooping, picked a daisy on the grass near the road; she began to pull off the white petals as she walked.

"You are only human," I said; "you must always remember this. To surpass our neighbors is a common fault; but to succeed, you must

believe more in yourself, in your talents, in your rights." She gave a short laugh.

"I am not even sure if I believe in you," she said. I stood quite still.

"Ann!" I said, "this is unkind when I have put such trust in you." She began to repeat aloud the verses, "He loves me, he loves me not." Slowly, one by one, she pulled the remaining petals off the stem. "I have always had a superstitious trust in flowers," she cried. She crushed the little yellow centre of the daisy in her hands.

"And what did the daisy say?" I asked.

"I won't tell you."

"Is it a secret?"

"Yes; a very great secret," she cried, shaking her head with its dusky curls.

"But you can tell me what it says," I urged.

"No. Some day perhaps you will find out." I laughed and turned the subject off.

"Now, Miss Brown, you will study in the future all you can. You are beginning over again; you can, you must succeed." She laughed: her beautiful face was smiling as she talked.

"Yes, yes, I will try to study hard. Sometimes I have moments when I like to work, as I told

you; then again I dream — I dream of other things."

"Do you?" I asked.

"Yes." Then she was silent.

"You must put aside these dreams," I said. She looked at me wondering.

"I have dreams too," I continued; "but they are best unrealized, unfinished."

"Why?" she asked.

"Because some dreams are unsuited to us." The girl seemed strangely gay, I thought.

"Won't you tell me what your dreams were?" she asked. "I want very much to know."

"When I tired of my city life, my horses, my carriages, my friends, I began to long for something different, something greater," I replied. "I wanted new occupations, new interests."

"Yes, yes," cried the girl.

"Then I became much absorbed in your art. I hoped to become an actor. I read diligently, I studied steadily. I saw myself before the world in a new career, before the public in a new *rôle*. My conceptions of the stage were great; my ambitions for it, high. By perseverance I knew I could succeed. Then my father

heard of my projects. He scorned the idea that his son should go upon the stage. In this unfavorable light the old man took pleasure in regarding me, while my sisters joined loudly in his cry of horror and dismay. I saw it was impossible to convince them, impossible to succeed. Then I gave way to their opinions, and abandoned my cherished schemes."

"It was very foolish of you," said Miss Brown. "You should have asserted your independence. You should not have cared for those narrow criticisms." I smiled sadly at her words.

"It is a serious matter for a man to turn against a rich parent; it is wiser to sacrifice one's dreams than take such a step as that."

"Oh, it was money which made you give way, was it? I did not think of that. See!" cried the girl, turning hastily away from me, "see those stately ships far out at sea." She pointed to the horizon. "Those smaller ones are yachts, I do believe."

"Are you fond of sailing?" I asked.

"Yes. And I have never been on board one of those fine boats in my life."

"Some day I will take you," I said.

"It will be great fun to go with you," cried the beautiful girl. Then she was silent again. The wind blew the dark curls from her face. I could see the rich color in her cheeks. We walked quickly: the sun was sinking slowly; we watched the clouds moving in the west. The girl had lost her gayety, her cheerfulness, I thought. Then we came in sight of the cottage, and she went in to join her father.

In a few days I returned to New York. Soon I became absorbed in the pursuit of pleasure there, but I never forgot the Browns.

One day, as I turned into Fifth Avenue, whom should I meet hurrying along the crowded street but Miss Brown! She was alone. I raised my hat as I approached. She held out her hand to me; her beautiful face was radiant with smiles.

"How glad I am to see you!" she cried.

"What brings you to New York?" said I.

"Business."

"Theatrical business?"

"Yes. I came to consult the manager. I return this afternoon to my father."

"You came to New York alone?"

"Quite alone," said Miss Brown with arch simplicity. As we talked we moved on down the avenue. Men touched their hats to me; women bowed their heads. I felt my face flush as I became conscious of their glances at my companion.

"Let us turn now," said I to her.

She looked at me, a strange expression in her face and in her glance.

"I prefer to walk on Fifth Avenue," she said. "And I am hungry."

"Is there any place where I can take you to relieve your pangs of hunger?" I inquired.

"To Delmonico's. Take me to Delmonico's!" exclaimed the girl, clasping her hands with pleasure at the thought.

"To Delmonico's!" I repeated, dazed at the very idea.

"Yes," cried Miss Brown. I laughed outright.

"Miss Brown, I must refuse to take you there."

"Why?" she asked.

"For many reasons. But more particularly because this is the fashionable hour. Every table would be engaged."

"By fashionable people?" she inquired.

Then she turned her eyes upon me with a look of scorn. I had not meant to use that adjective; it had slipped from me unawares.

"I seldom go to that restaurant with young ladies," I said.

"Make no excuses," cried she. But I detected a shade of disappointment in the fair young face.

"You see, Miss Brown," I went on, "it is customary for young ladies like yourself to be chaperoned." She gave a short laugh.

"If father were here, would you take us?" she asked.

"Yes." She threw at me a look which might mean dislike, distrust; but I gave no heed to it.

"Which way were you going when I joined you?" I asked.

"To the boat."

"It does not start for two hours," I replied.

"Perhaps I can satisfy my appetite on board," said the actress. Again she looked at me steadily. I lowered my lashes. I did not wish to read her thought.

We walked on in silence. I drew a breath of relief as we left the avenue.

Soon we reached the elevated road. A brief ten minutes brought us to our station. We went down the long flight of steps into the street. I gave Miss Brown my arm to guide her through the crowd. At length we reached the boat. I offered to make inquiries about luncheon, but Miss Brown said she did not wish to eat anything.

"I thought you were so hungry!" I exclaimed.

"I was joking all the time. But you were too stupid to see my wit."

"I do not call that wit," said I, angry at the girl's strange ways.

I waited an hour on the deck with my young charge. I had an engagement at the Club. Each minute added to my impatience, to my discomfort. She talked on incessantly. I had no opportunity for escape. It was not until the gong sounded for "all on shore," that I raised my hat for good-by. Miss Brown held out her hand to me; her beautiful face was strangely pale.

"Good-by," she said.

"Take care of yourself," I said.

There was something pathetic in the beautiful face just then. I felt myself something of a coward as I turned away.

"I will come and see you soon," I called to her.

Five weeks passed before I could arrange for my next trip to the City-by-the-Sea.

Three days before starting I wrote to Mr. Brown that I would arrive the following Tuesday by the afternoon boat. As he did not answer the letter, I concluded he had not received it.

At length the day came. On the boat I met the daughter of one of my father's richest friends. She was travelling alone with her maid. We were old acquaintances. I begged her to regard me as a chaperon. She did so. As the steamer neared her dock, it grew too dark to distinguish the figures on the landing. I noticed a rough crowd. I offered my protection to the rich girl. Together we stepped on land. A high wind blew off the sea. We felt the change from New York; we were jolted and pushed by the noisy crowd. I kept my companion's arm safe within mine. I

guided her to her carriage. Just as I raised my hat and made my parting bow, a figure darted forward and two slender hands grasped my arm.

"I have been waiting so long for you!" cried the breathless voice. I turned sharply. I tried to disengage my arm.

"I began to fear you would not come," the voice continued, "and the dock was cold and dreary." I bent my head in the deepening shadows. I saw two greenish-blue eyes looking at me.

"Miss Brown," I cried, "what brought you here? This is no fit place for you!"

"I came to meet you."

"Is there anything the matter?" I asked sharply.

"Nothing."

"No illness — your father is well?"

"Very well." We hurried on in silence. At length the girl spoke again.

"I watched the boat coming in the distance," she said. "It grew larger and larger each moment. I tried to distinguish you among the passengers on deck, but it got dark too quickly and I could not see."

"I was sitting in the stern," I said.

"Did you find the time very long?"

"No. I met with friends." The fingers tightened their hold on my sleeve.

"Fashionable friends?"

"Fashionable friends," I repeated.

"Was the pretty lady you were with when you came on shore one of them?"

"Yes," I answered.

"I thought so," murmured Miss Brown.

After a while we came in sight of the little cottage on the road, near the bay.

Mr. Brown greeted me warmly as I entered, asking me to stay all night. I refused. "The hotel room was waiting for me," I said.

Later the actress stepped out on the low piazza, and resting her slender figure against the wooden railings, gazed far out to the sea. I watched her eagerly. She was very beautiful that night.

Old Mr. Brown smoked a cigar with me. We looked at the stars coming one after another into the vast heavens. The pale yellow moon rose high above the calm waters. I felt strangely quiet, strangely at peace.

At eleven o'clock I went to my hotel. My thoughts lingered behind with the sea.

The next day I walked about the town. I met friends. One invited me to luncheon, others to dinner, to tea. I accepted all the invitations I could. Late in the evening I excused myself, and started off by a lonely road to pay my visit to the Browns.

Mr. Brown was out. As I approached I saw the young actress seated in the parlor at a table near the lamp. She was hard at work, I thought. I must have frightened her, for she started up nervously as I entered.

"I beg your pardon," I said; "I came in without ringing. I did not mean to surprise you." She laughed and said, —

"I thought you were not coming. It is very late." I walked over to the table where she sat. She looked up at me startled. Her face grew red, then white. I picked up the book she was reading.

"Your lines are difficult," I said.

"Sometimes I learn them easily," she answered, "sometimes not so well."

"Have you grown tired?" I asked, bending over her beautiful head.

"Yes," she murmured. I watched her taper fingers playing with the corners of her book. No jewel adorned the white throat, the small ears. Her dress was plain and badly cut.

"Miss Brown," I began, then turning shortly I walked away. I moved a chair to the window, I sat down. I buried my face for a moment in my hands. I suffered. Could I love you, I wondered, love your beauty always? Then with an effort I raised my head. The light was falling on Miss Brown's face, her eyes were strangely larger owing to it. With a quick movement she rose and threw her book aside. Then rushing to me she knelt down at my side.

"You are unhappy," she cried. "I knew it yesterday." The curly head came nearer to my arm. "Can I help you? Please let me try?"

"No, no," I said.

"Is it the world?" she cried. "I knew it was filled with wickedness."

"May you learn no more of it," I solemnly said.

"Let me help you," she cried again. "I believe if you were to tell me I could really understand!"

"No, no; you cannot," I said. Then the green eyes filled with blinding, rushing tears. She bowed her head, she wept. I tried my best to comfort her. I scarcely knew what to say. The sobs came quicker, louder. My efforts were in vain.

"You must control yourself," I said. I dared not ask her why she wept. I knew the reason well. She loved me! But what could her love do for me? Poor, honest, trusting girl, thought I. I pushed her gently from me. With a cry like one in pain she rose to her feet. Going to the table she snatched the play-book lying there. She tore it into twenty pieces, then stamped upon them with her feet.

"I hate those lines," she cried. "I would renounce them all — if — if" — A noise outside cut short her sentence. She stopped and trembled. I got up quickly. I looked out.

"Your father is coming," I said. She threw herself upon the sofa like a disappointed child.

As Mr. Brown entered the room the girl darted by him and out the door; on she ran far down the dark road which overlooked the sea.

He asked me to come out and see the view: the

sky was dark and lowering. I watched the tall, slim figure until it disappeared from sight.

I went back to the hotel at midnight. Before retiring I re-packed my trunk. I returned to New York by the morning boat.

I felt relieved as I came in sight of the busy city, far away from the young actress, her struggles, her hopes, her life. It was well for me, I thought. Such a woman could never satisfy the society in which I lived. Unhappiness, disappointment, would surely follow such a union even to the end.

I felt sorry for her too as the weeks crept by, and I thought of her with her wild nature, her great heart. Were many women to be found like her? I wrote to the old man several times. Only once did I receive an answer. He said his daughter had gone to New York to see the manager. He said many encouraging things of her improvement in her work.

Three months had elapsed since my visit to the Browns. I would have yielded to my desire

and gone back that spring, I believe, had not my physician suggested a flying trip abroad. Wise man, thought I, change will restore my health, will also benefit my future. The swift tide of temptation was rushing out to sea. The strong current of love was carrying me to the spot from which I would fly, from which I would escape. Too well I realized my own weakness, too well I realized my heart's strength.

I would do well to leave the actress, to leave the land in which she dwelt.

I wrote her a short note; I said but little — I merely stated my plan to go abroad. I begged her to study during my absence to succeed on my return. She sent me a curt answer, wishing me a pleasant journey. I believe I was disappointed when I had finished it.

I found the sea very strengthening, the variety very pleasing. The voyage came to an end much sooner than I would wish.

In Havre I became greatly interested in the old town, with its queer buildings, its quaint streets. I hurried on to Paris — Paris with its passing glory, its dazzling glitter. Who could fail to enjoy its amusements, its pleasures?

I fell in with some American friends. They soon made me one of them, at home in the foreign city.

We went from *café* to *café*, from boulevard to boulevard, from garden to garden, drinking in the delights of that fair city.

Nine months later I left Paris. I travelled fast. I saw many things, — things which distracted my thoughts, my brain. But one day I read in the American news of the *début* of a young actress. My mind flew back to the beautiful girl whose career had been so much to me. Success! Success! My hopes had been realized, my ideas fulfilled. I longed to return to New York, but I felt myself quite unequal to the task which awaited me. To see Miss Brown, to hear her voice, was denied my life just then. "Travel in the opposite direction! Travel fast," whispered a voice in my ears.

I did travel fast. I saw much. Going to Dresden I settled down there for an indefinite time. The life was not Parisian. I missed the bright French city, with its gayly dressed people, its crowds, its lights.

At length I returned to France. A few days

of journeying through the old towns and again I was in Paris. Paris! There is but one Paris! I hurried about the galleries, the theatres; my days were fully occupied. I saw no actress to compare with Miss Brown.

Thus the time passed until my father wrote for my return. "I wish you to come immediately," his letter read.

I knew not if it were with sad heart or gay that I made my preparations to return to America.

But at last I was ploughing the waves in the great ocean steamer. Home! I only half-realized that Europe was behind me in those fast-receding shores.

As the noble ship sped on I began to feel like an American again. She rocked, she struggled through the dark blue seas. Each moment her passengers came nearer to the other shores.

I began to grow more accustomed to the thought of America as Europe faded in my thoughts.

Then the week ended. My journey came to its close.

I had been in Europe two years, — months

longer than I had intended. Was I glad to reach New York?

As I went about the city, my friends stopped me at every corner, every turn. I was welcome home. I had much to do those first days of my arrival, — notes to answer, letters to read.

Among my correspondence I found a line from the manager, begging me to stop in at his theatre any evening that week.

"Miss Brown is a great success," he wrote.

Friday came before I had a chance to see the young actress in her new *rôle*.

Again I was seated before the stage on which she would appear. I remembered well the first night I noticed her. Her queer eyes haunt me me now. As the curtain rose, my heart beat fast. I leaned forward. I scanned the actresses going through their parts. Miss Brown did not appear. Eager, breathless, I waited. At every sound my pulse beat faster, my heart thumped harder. I heard a murmur, an applause. Miss Brown was before me. I sought her face; her glance met mine. Once, only once, she looked straight at me. I noted the richness of her gown. She had diamonds at her throat, jewels flashing in her dark hair.

Later I hurried behind the scenes to speak to her. She came into the little room where I sat waiting. As I rose she held out her slender hand. I grasped it. I looked at her an instant. I bowed before her as a man would bow to a queen. I had barely touched her long fingers, for she moved away instantly, and stood erect against the curtain at the door.

"Miss Brown," said I, "my prophecy has come true." She inclined her head like a graceful swan.

"I have conquered, you mean." Her voice sounded like music in my ears.

"You deserve much credit," I answered. My heart was fluttering. I felt strangely awkward in the presence of the young actress. Our old friendship seemed broken and away. I watched her as she drew on her long gloves in readiness for the next act.

"I have not seen your father," I said, anxious to break the silence. She drew aside the curtain. Touching the bell a servant appeared.

"Find Mr. Brown," she said. At that moment her call came. She bowed to me, then hurried to the stage.

I felt that I had lost her, — lost her indeed.

She had not even mentioned my absence, my return.

I had a brief conversation with her father. He was greatly interested now in his daughter's career.

"She studied hard," he said. "She has pluck; there's no doubt of that."

"Was it not I who saw all this long ago?" I exclaimed, nettled by the old man's indifference toward me in the matter.

"Yes, yes — the money. I remember you lent the money."

"The loan is a small part of the affair," I replied.

"But the actress has not forgotten it. Not she, sir. Only last week she asked me to pay you back."

"The payment can come later," I said.

"So I told my lass. But she is firm. You must pay him, father, says she; you must pay him now."

"I am in no hurry, I assure you, Mr. Brown," I declared. I was disappointed, hurt, at the purely business way the old man had regarded me.

Surely I had done for them what money could not do. I had spoken in the girl's favor to one of the most influential men in theatrical circles. I had been the direct cause of Miss Brown's success.

"I told you long ago I would make your daughter a great actress," I said.

"You were right, quite right, sir," replied Mr. Brown. He looked at me with that absent expression in his eyes. Then he shook hands for good-by. "My daughter has talent, — real talent," he repeated, as he held the door open for me to pass out.

I went back to my seat in the theatre, disgusted with myself and the world.

Yet I was present at every performance after that. I never missed a night.

One Sunday I met the Browns driving in the Park. As I bowed a man on the front seat of their carriage raised his hat to me. I recognized the manager.

Soon New York took up the praise of the young actress. She was courted and sought by critics, and even literary men. The more conservative sets gathered up their skirts as she came near, least they might be seen on friendly terms

with the actress. But Miss Brown had plenty of invitations for all that.

One evening I saw her at a Musicale. I stood aside to watch her manners, her ways. The costly gown proved suitable for the stately pose, the slender figure. She stood in the midst of these, — my fashionable friends, — her dark head thrown back, her throat white like marble. I looked, but in vain, for the wayward girl I had once known. She had vanished. I knew not where. "The accursed world," I muttered, "has clasped its golden fetters around you too, destroying your fair beauty, your sweet youth! Yes, the same world which kept me from you that night when joy and love and happiness beckoned me to its peace. Those same golden fetters — fetters of criticism, fetters of fashion, divide my love from me."

I strode away, sick at heart and weary.

The next morning the mail brought me a check from Mr. Brown. "I return you my share of our debt," he wrote. I took the small slip of pink paper; it flickered and trembled as I held it up between my fingers.

"Yes, your debt is paid," I muttered as I tore

the check in two and threw my credit into the waste-basket.

It was shortly after this I learned the actress' plans. She was to make a tour of the States before sailing for Europe for her *début* there.

The news was very unexpected, very sudden, to me. I suppose I ought to have expected it, but I was completely taken by surprise. For several days I was quite unlike myself — "Cross and out of sorts," my sisters said.

One night, as I sat in my accustomed place before the stage, I noticed Miss Brown turned her wondering eyes upon me. She looked once, twice, three times. But I read, like a flash from the past, an expression of sadness, of longing in her face. Even in the most tragic parts of her acting I had often missed it. My mind became disturbed, my thoughts distracted. I saw the young woman a genius before me, possessing those very talents I had so long, so diligently sought. Her beauty was superb, her grace exquisite. In her acting she was no longer a player going through her part, but a woman struggling with her fate, her life. I saw the deep color in her cheeks, the wild throbbing in her heart. As

the actress she would save her lover; for him she would renounce all things. She was the one being who could restore his happiness, his peace. She bent down over the young actor. How near her pure face was to his brow!

"This is true love," she breathed, "to be with you forever." He raised his eyes and looked into her beautiful face.

"For me you would do all this?" he cried.

"For you I do renounce my hopes, my ambitions. You are my life!"

"Is your world so little to you in comparison?" he asked. For answer she twined her arms about his neck.

"Do you realize the sacrifice?"

"In love there is no sacrifice," she whispered.

"How noble, how good!" he cried.

"Hush, hush," breathed the beautiful woman. Then on his breast she bowed her head. The tears rolled down her cheeks, they rested on her dark lashes which swept against his arm. Upon her sacrifice, upon his joy, the curtain fell.

I sighed. In such acting there is great art. The actress had indeed lived through her part in the reality of what she played. I longed to speak

to the beautiful woman, to praise her conceptions, her talents.

I made my way through the audience; amongst those people there was no sound. In silence they left the theatre, in wonderment they went home.

I hurried behind the scenes; I sent in my card.

Miss Brown came very soon. I looked in her face for the traces of her sorrow, of her tears. They had vanished! It was really acting, then? I had thought to find it easy to speak with her, she had seemed so near me when on the stage. Now, standing in her presence, I was confused, dumb.

"You want to see me?" she asked.

She took up her old position against the dark curtain near the door.

"Yes." I paused. I hoped she would help me by a sign, a word; but she only turned her gaze upon me in silence and disdain.

"Miss Brown," I went on, "you will turn your thoughts for a moment from the past to the present, and I do not think there will be any surprise to you in what I wish to say."

"You wish to speak about the check," she interrupted. "I thought my father had already

sent it to you. By making an arrangement with my manager I was enabled to receive part of my salary in advance." The color rose to my forehead, the flush of anger rushed to my face.

"No; the check you speak of is of little value. The loan I made your father was for friendship, not for gain."

"For fashionable friendship?" asked the actress, raising her brows as she spoke.

"No," I cried. "My list of fashionable friends is closed just now." She bit her lips and frowned.

"So is mine," she said. The ghost of a smile came into her beautiful face.

"I am glad that New York figures on yours," said I.

She looked straight at me; my eyes fell before her searching glance.

"I find these people like me better, respect me more, than you thought they would in the past gone by."

I turned indignant to the young actress. Her words cut me deep. Too true had been my misgivings, my fears of New York's criticisms upon her long ago.

"Miss Brown," said I, "forget the past; it is

nothing to us now. I have come to beg this of you."

"I have forgotten what is finished of it," she said, "but the memory comes back sometimes, even when I would forget it all."

"I suppose it does," I answered, holding out my hand. She touched me with her slender fingers as she bade me good-by.

She did not ask me to remain.

"Good-by," I replied shortly, bitterly. Then I turned and went away. It was useless to argue with so proud, so strong, so talented a woman.

Not long after this unsatisfactory interview with Miss Brown, my elder sister went to a luncheon to meet the young actress. She was not interested in her beauty, and expressed her opinion against receiving actresses in society.

"Some young society man will marry her, I suppose," she said, "horrify his good people by conferring their honored name on such an ordinary woman."

"Miss Brown is not ordinary," said I sharply. "If more women in society were like her, it would be a better world to mix in."

"Oh, so you are fascinated by this new

beauty!" she cried. "You are the first Lynton to acknowledge such a fact. Your taste is bad, dear fellow."

"I am a better judge of Miss Brown's beauty than you are, mademoiselle," I replied hotly.

"No doubt," answered Miss Lynton. "I do not belong to the theatrical world. But, my dear brother, if you could hear some of our leaders of New York society on the subject of entertaining actresses, you might think it foolish to be fascinated by a pair of green eyes."

But I was fascinated by those eyes, more fascinated than I cared to admit. I made no attempt to speak with Miss Brown again before her departure from New York. I felt the sting of that last meeting too keenly to wish for a renewal of it.

Mr. and Miss Brown went first to Philadelphia. Two weeks later I read of their presence in Washington, from which place they would journey for two private performances to the City-by-the-Sea. I must see her the night she played there. It would be at a fashionable house. I could not stay away.

I took the boat from New York, arriving in

good time on the day of the Browns' expected arrival.

I wandered round alone during the morning. In the afternoon I called on the actress at her hotel. Mr. Brown received me. He said his daughter had gone out for a walk.

"Which way?" I asked.

"I guess you will find her down by the sea," said the old man.

I hurried out. I followed the road by the bay until I reached the walk leading to the cliff. I strained my eyes, I watched every figure in the far distance.

I was in luck. As I neared the sea I caught sight of a tall figure standing on the rocks. Hastening my steps I soon joined her. She laughed joyously as I came to her side.

I made no excuse for my presence; she needed none. It seemed so natural that we should be together when in the City-by-the-Sea.

"Miss Brown," said I, "this is much better than New York."

"Yes, yes, we both love the sea," she cried.

"I thought you loved it long ago," I said.

"Ah, yes. The sea, the beautiful, cruel sea.

I like to watch the waves roll on. I wonder do they reach eternity? Look! They are rolling quickly now."

"I should like to make my home beside these moving waters."

"So would I." She moved nearer to me. I held out my hand to prevent her feet from slipping on the dampness of the rocks. The winds blew round us, whispering their dull music in our ears.

"Miss Brown," said I, "have you really decided to go abroad?"

"Yes," she replied. I wanted her to look at me, but her glance was far away, watching the horizon of the moving waters.

"I wish you would not go," said I.

"Why?" she asked, her eyes meeting mine.

"Because I love you." The words were very few, very simple, as I uttered them, but I think she understood.

"Do you?" she murmured.

"I think it is no new story in our lives," I repeated.

Her slight frame swayed a moment as the wind sighed round us.

"I loved you once," she said; "I believe you knew it then, but I was so impetuous, so young, I scarce knew how to hide my thoughts from you. The first time I saw you I felt your influence, your presence. Why did I leave New York? because you told me to go! Why did I study? because you bade me study! Why did I struggle? because you gave me hope! It was for your praise I longed; for your satisfaction I worked! But just when I needed advice — needed it to give me courage, to give me strength — you went away, with just a line, just a word. You crossed the wide ocean; you travelled fast. You forgot America. You forgot the actress; you forgot her career. A little while I brooded over your absence, your silence. What had I done? In what had I been in fault towards you? Then with a struggle I put the question unanswered from me. I turned over a new leaf in my thoughtless life. I studied, I worked, I hoped — alone. On our return to New York I did not lose a moment. I never missed my rehearsal, my part. I became interested, enthusiastic, in my success, in my career. I dreamed of my ambitions, my triumphs. I learned to forget many things, my

failures, my disappointments, my past. But greatest of all I learned to forget you."

"Ann," I cried, "let us understand each other. I have come back now. I want you. I need you. Promise to be my wife." The sea moaned and roared as I waited for her to speak.

"No," she cried.

"No! Why do you say this? Surely, if you cared for my praise, for my satisfaction once, you cannot so easily do without me, you cannot forget me now."

"It is not that I forget you now — to-day, when you are with me again, I feel your presence, but I am no longer a heedless child. I have my career before me now. I do not need you as I once needed you." She stopped a moment. "You would not be satisfied sharing my life with me."

"Why not give up that life, Ann? As my wife you can take up your position in society. You will have no longer any need to work."

"Is this the advice you give me?" she cried. "After these weeks and months of study, of hope, would you ask me to cast aside my success for the sake of your ambitions? No, no, it would be ill-

suited to my roving ways to sit and play the idle woman of society."

"You would have your occupations," I said.

"The occupations of answering invitations, I suppose."

"Our women of society do more useful things than those," I answered. "You would have your horses, your servants, your carriages" —

"And what would those luxuries be to me? Foolish pastimes, empty pleasures, in comparison with my work, my plays."

I bit my lips. "I know not how else to please you, Ann. As my wife, you would be expected by the world to renounce your acting and your stage."

"You still love your social world better than you love the actress!" she exclaimed bitterly. "I see it all too well."

"No," I cried; "but in society my father" —

"Society! always society! No, no; as you love your fashionable world, so the actress loves her art." She flashed a look of hatred, of scorn, at me from her green eyes. They seemed to reach my very soul. I turned away, I shuddered. What was there in that glance which made me raise my hat and stride away?

On and on I walked. Mile upon mile slipped behind me in the sinking shadows of that afternoon light.

Then I stood still beside the restless, moaning sea. I listened to its dreary song.

Even now, years after, the sound thereof comes back to me, making me tremble in its weird memories, strange realities.

THE HEROINE OF A PICTURE.

THE HEROINE OF A PICTURE.

I REMEMBER one year, during the time of the Salon in Paris, I was strangely attracted by a painting in one of the rooms on the right, in the Palais de l'Industrie. It was a large canvas, including in all about thirty figures. The coloring was vivid and of much variety. The subject represented a marriage service in the higher circles of life. The bride, a young girl, stood before the priest; at her right was the groom, and behind her were the parents. The girl's face was beautiful in its pure whiteness and mobile lines. She was partly turned towards her *fiancé*, for not yet had they been pronounced man and wife. The words were being said, "With this ring I thee wed," when the bride's finger had trembled, and, in an unlucky moment, the ring of gold had fallen to the ground. The groom, with much embarrassment, was stooping

to restore it to the priest, when a stir in the congregation was caused by the exit of a young man from the church. His pale face was pained and angry. His dark eyes were hard and staring as they met those of the intended husband of the fair young bride.

I went time after time to view the picture. There was a fascination in the unfinished story, a pathos in the strange union of the young woman and the old man. The two figures stood out upon their canvas, making them live and breathe to me, even in their silent unreality.

One day, as I stood before the beloved painting, a stranger tapped me on the shoulder. I looked around. I started like a man awaking from a dream.

"Pardon, Monsieur, but I have often seen you watch this picture. Can I make so bold as to tell you the true story?" asked the stranger.

"The story of the young and beautiful woman?" I exclaimed. "So, then, there is a story, and I am not wrong in believing in the reality of such a face?"

"No," he replied; "the figure is drawn from

life, and the painful episode here painted has a living example for its model."

I was enchanted, and, taking a good position before the canvas, I bade my strange friend proceed with its true history.

"The bride," said he, pointing to the young girl, "is the daughter of a French banker. Early in life her father had been successful, but later, fortune turned against him; his financial enterprises came to no good end. At the very time of his worst failure, his young daughter, Mademoiselle Henriette, was about to make her *début* in society. Money was necessary, both for her personal wants and her social successes.

"The poor banker was almost distracted; he knew not where to turn. At the right hand or the left, the creditors were ever casting their shadows before him.

"One day, at an unlooked-for moment, an old and much respected friend of the banker's, Monsieur Armand Galtier, offered to help him out of his embarrassments. The man was rich, and could afford to make great promises. At length Monsieur Michel Bussey's difficulties were satisfactorily arranged; he felt he could again hold up

his head in business as well as social circles. But just at the ending of their interview, so satisfactory in its character, Monsieur Galtier said shortly,—

"'Michel, old friend, I now have a favor to ask of you.'

"'Granted,' cried the grateful banker.

"'Your daughter Mademoiselle Henriette in marriage.' The poor father was astonished.

"'My daughter Henriette in marriage! Impossible, my good fellow; she is but a child and you are nearly sixty.'

"'Such difference in age is not unusual in these days,' pursued the rich man, 'and I will take upon my own shoulders the responsibility of her happiness.' Monsieur Bussey was annoyed; he well knew the power of his daughter's beauty, for her he had great ambitions. He never meant to strike a bargain with his friend.

"'You will give your consent, Michel,' urged Monsieur Galtier. The banker hesitated a moment, and then said,—

"'My consent I give; but for Henriette's feelings I cannot answer.'

"'Leave those to me,' said the rich man, content with his share in the arrangement.

"So it happened that Henriette Bussey was given in marriage to Armand Galtier. She did not love him. No. Her affections had already been promised to the dark-haired boy, in the background of the picture. But Monsieur Gaston Bernard, for he it was, had never spoken to her father upon the subject. He was poor, and afraid of what the banker would say to his proposed alliance with his beautiful daughter.

"The curious incident at the church was the cause of much anxiety to Monsieur Bussey; but Monsieur Galtier never alluded to it once, and seemed entirely satisfied with their marriage service.

"The beautiful Henriette soon became the pet of society. Night after night she would sit at the opera, and from her box her diamonds would flicker and flash their costly rays around her. Her husband was her constant attendant. Devoted, kind, the people said.

"Their appearance was looked for at every *soirée*, every dinner and musicale. Paris rang with their praise. Old Monsieur Bussey was delighted. Henriette loved Armand.

"But it chanced one day that in going to their

apartments he found Gaston Bernard seated there. It happened so quite often. The young man's eyes were defiant and daring as they met the old man's gaze. Monsieur Bussey was annoyed; he determined to speak to Henriette about it. Later her husband came in, and the banker thought it unbecoming on his part to interfere. 'Armand will arrange his own matters,' he thought, 'and not thank me for advice.'

"So the time wore on. The Galtiers still went everywhere. Henriette walked in her costly gowns, drove in her luxurious carriages in the avenues, and sometimes with her husband in the Bois. He was devoted in his attentions, in his manner kind. If at times he watched his wife's movements or gestures, it was to think how fair she was — more fair and beautiful every day, every hour.

"But by and by Monsieur Bussey began to have his fears, and daily they increased.

"Henriette's indifference worried him. She would seem so listless, absent-minded, when in the quiet of her life.

"'Excitement all the time!' he would exclaim;

'why, too much pleasure is a dreadful thing!' Then Henriette would laugh and clasp her jewelled hands, and say, —

"'Oh, no, papa, indeed you are mistaken. I am so happy, so content when in the glitter of the world. I even love its changing moods, its fickleness!'

"'Hush, hush, my child. I hate to hear you say such things.' Then her husband would put his hand upon his old friend's arm, and laughing answer, 'Henriette is but a child. She does not understand the weight of all her words. Yet, let her be young and happy while she can. I love to see her eyes light up at the sound of music, or her face brighten at the cadence of the dance.'

"Would it then be any wonder if the young wife were spoiled? Carriages, horses, servants, constantly at her command. For who was there to chide or check her fanciful career? The husband was too blind, or maybe too indulgent, to speak the needed words to his young and beautiful wife.

"She waltzed, she danced, at every *soirée* until one night on her return she could not content herself nor get one hour of sleep. Her husband, hearing of this, was alarmed, and going to

Monsieur Bussey spoke to him of it. The old man shook his head.

"'Henriette is sadly changed,' he said.

"'Perhaps all this excitement is too much for her to stand,' replied her husband. He spoke with much concern.

"'I wish you and Henriette would go away.'

"'Why?' asked the rich man.

"'Paris is no place for your wife. She is far too heedless, much too young.'

"'A quiet city would not satisfy her taste.'

"'That is very true. But I wish you could do something to get her out of this.' Monsieur Galtier only raised his hands and laughed.

"'It would be impossible, I suppose,' continued the old man.

"'Yes, quite impossible. Henriette loves Paris. And I assure you, I feel no concern about her gayeties. Young people are different from older ones.'

"'Yes, yes. But do you not see the folly, the ruin, of all this admiration, this praise?'

"'No. For your daughter is a woman who merits admiration and praise.' The old man turned away dissatisfied.

"'Michel,' said Armand kindly, 'there is something on your mind. What is it? Can't you tell me now?'

"'No, no,' cried the banker; 'I am quite satisfied, you are her husband. You know best.'

"'And you her father, sir,' Armand Galtier cried. 'Pray let me know your thought.' The request was earnest, an answer had to come. The father drew his friend aside, although this precaution was unnecessary as there was no one by to hear, and whispered, —

"'I hate to tell you this.' The rich man turned indignant.

"'What you have to tell me, tell me now. Speak out; I cannot bear suspense,' he cried.

"'Hush, only this my friend: I wish you would not have Gaston Bernard so often at your house.' The father meant it well, he thought to save his child. The husband clinched his fists and frowned.

"'You are right, perhaps,' he said. 'But then true love is blind.' He gave a short laugh, and very soon he went away. When he was gone Monsieur Bussey felt relieved. It was his duty to mention this. Now the husband would put an

end to Gaston's visits, and Henriette — well — Henriette would soon forgive, forget.

"But Armand Galtier was never kinder, never more gentle to his wife than on that day and those following his interview with the banker.

"A week passed, ten days. There was no sign of Gaston Bernard at Madame Galtier's apartments. The husband congratulated himself on his wise prudence, his silence to his wife.

"The opera was at its height. Henriette was going to her box. She dressed herself in a rich gown of satin, — her diamonds round her throat and in her hair.

"The clock upon the mantel chimed out the hour in its sweet, silvery tones. 'Eight o'clock!' mused Madame Galtier. 'My husband will be late.' She moved to the window. She pushed back the curtain and looked out. The streets were alive with people and with lights. The carriages were rolling by in great numbers — Henriette was anxious to be off. She heard her husband on the stair. She replaced the curtain. She waited. Monsieur Galtier entered. His face was red from walking, and he was out of breath. He

advanced toward his wife, and stooping, kissed her lips. 'Already going out?' he asked.

"'Yes, Armand, and do hurry. I am so afraid you will be late.'

"'Be late for what?'

"'The opera.'

"'I thought you went last night!' Madame Galtier laughed.

"'I was there last night, but now I want to go again!' The rich man glanced about his costly home. To him there were great attractions in its taste and quietness. Then turning to his handsome wife, he said, —

"'This evening, Henriette, I would prefer to stay at home.' The young wife flushed crimson.

"'This lovely night remain in doors? Oh, no! Surely you are joking, Armand!' He moved toward his wife, he took both her hands in his.

"'No, I am in earnest now.' The blue eyes opened wide, the red lips said, —

"'You have never wanted me to remain away from my amusements before.'

"'All the more reason in the asking now, my little girl,' he said. His gray eyes were very kind.

"'Not when I am quite dressed and ready, Armand!'

"'You have not dressed yourself so tastefully in vain. None could admire your costume more than I, Henriette; spend this one evening alone with me, your husband.' He was looking at her as he spoke.

"'I want so much to go,' she pleaded.

"'And I want you so much to remain!' Madame Galtier was taken by surprise. She had never longed more for the delicious music of the opera than at the instant when her husband's voice was begging her to stay at home. She wavered a moment — just a moment, and then said, —

"'I must go, Armand, but you can stay at home!' If Monsieur Galtier was displeased, he did not show it. He moved away and answered, —

"'We will both go, Henriette. But as I am not dressed and ready, you can send the carriage back for me; I will follow later.' Then going to his own room, he shut and locked the door. Henriette put on her wraps and quickly left the house. She was not troubled by her husband's mood. He had said he would come later, and he always kept his word.

"After a while when Monsieur Galtier entered his box, he found his wife seated in front and by her side was Gaston Bernard. He only glanced at them once. So on they talked and laughed and whispered.

"Soon Monsieur Galtier left the box, and going outside, smoked a cigarette. He finished two before returning to his wife; as he came in, the last words of the opera were being sung. Monsieur Galtier found his wife's cloak and put it around her. He offered her his arm, and as he turned, saw Gaston Bernard at his side. He raised his hat, and said with dignity, —

"'Monsieur Bernard, I wish you good-night.'

"Henriette walked on with her husband; as they passed through the crowd, she felt his arm pressing close to hers. He did not speak, but hurried to his carriage. He helped Madame Galtier in, then followed her. As they drove home, he asked her how she liked the music and the plot. But Henriette only answered yes or no at random. She was shy, afraid; she knew not why. She kept her face turned from her husband. At length they reached their own door. Monsieur Galtier followed her into the house and

up the stairs. Entering the parlor Henriette stopped.

"'I think I will go straight to my room,' she said, 'I am tired.' Armand pushed to the door.

"'No, not yet,' he said. 'I want you for one moment.'

"'But, Armand, I want to go to bed now.'

"'One moment, please,' he said.

"'Can't you see how tired and pale I am?' murmured the young wife. 'I would much rather go.'

"'No,' repeated the rich man. She moved toward the door, but Monsieur Galtier stretched out one hand, and with the other grasped the key and turned it.

"'You cannot go, at least not yet, until I have finished what I have to say.'

"'How can you be so obstinate, so rude?' said his wife.

"'Henriette, I beg you listen to me;' and the rich man's voice was determined.

"'But you are unkind, unreasonable, Armand.'

"'I have never been unkind, unreasonable, to you in my life. If you think one moment you will realize the folly of what you say.'

"'Do you intend to keep me long?' cried Madame Galtier.

"'No.'

"'It is late, and cold for me to wait in this room now. Please, Armand, please let me go.'

"'The room is not cold, Henriette,' he said.

"'I feel it so,' she urged. 'You do not believe me, Armand. Indeed, I want to go.'

"'I do believe you,' he answered. 'You are, no doubt, most anxious to leave me just now!' He laughed.

"'But you are so queer, so *difficile* to-night. You do not understand me; you are angry. I can see it; I know not what has provoked you so.'

"'It is you, Henriette, who until to-night have never known me.'

"'I fail to know you now, it is quite true. You are like a stranger with me.'

"'In a moment I shall make myself more clear. I do not like your acquaintance, your friendship, with that young Gaston Bernard.'

"'You have no reason for objecting to him,' said Henriette, her eyes flashing, her head proudly back. 'He is a good and honored friend.'

"'That may be so, but you are too young to judge of him, Henriette, and of his ways. I do not wish to see him in your box again.'

"'I have asked him to come.'

"'Then you cannot go yourself.'

"'Why?'

"'Do not ask me questions to which I would not wish to give an answer.'

"'I have a right to know.'

"'It is simply that I do not like to see you, my wife, talking, laughing, whispering in my opera box with him!'

"'There is no harm in that!'

"'You made yourself conspicuous this evening, and that is something which my wife should never do.'

"'What nonsense!'

"'I mean just what I have said.'

"'I see that you are jealous.'

"'Only of your rights. I tell you now, Henriette, I do not wish to see you speaking to Gaston Bernard again.' Madame Galtier showed her temper in her face.

"'You shall not command me,' she cried.

"'I must,' he answered, 'since you choose to

disregard my wish.' There was silence. Painful moments to them both. Then Henriette pulled her costly cloak around her and picked up her gloves and fan.

"'I would like to pass. Please open the door,' she said.

"'Certainly,' replied her husband, unlocking the door and throwing open wide the portière. She walked by him without another word or glance. But when she had gone Armand Galtier buried his face in his hands. How long he sat alone he did not know, but when he raised his eyes again, his wife was standing at the door. He started at her wonderous fairness, her great beauty.

"'Armand,' she said, 'you have made a suggestion to me, your wife, to-night, which I can not and do not wish to understand. You have given me great fears. I am afraid. I am afraid of you and of your words. No, do not come near me,' for she saw him step toward her. 'I am very angry.' Armand Galtier could see that she was trembling. 'What I wanted to say to you was this. I cannot obey your wishes. It would be a poor compliment to Henriette Bussey should she refuse to meet her old friends. Monsieur

Gaston Bernard would scarcely realize that it was your *command.* I am too proud to take this step.'

"'Henriette, you reason well. But can you not see that, as your husband, I have my ideas and even my *commands?* This man, with whom you are intimate, is no good friend for you. When you are older, dear, you will know that in my judgments I am right.' Madame Galtier smoothed back her brown hair, and clasping her hands, said earnestly, —

"'In telling me this of my friend, you only make our friendship stronger. It is so cruel to speak against another man.'

"'And is it necessary for you to defend another man against your husband?' Madame Galtier gave no answer to the question.

"'Now, Henriette, go to your room and think well over what we both have said.'

"'You must allow me to speak to Monsieur Gaston.'

"'No; and you must promise that my word shall be obeyed.' She shook her head.

"'I cannot.'

"'This is absurd!' exclaimed the man. 'You

are foolish, — deaf to all reason as well as to commands.' But the wife did not speak. The light of the candles was reflected in her pale face. Armand Galtier went to her side. 'Henriette,' he said, 'let us not speak any more to-night of this — this stupid subject.' She drew back. Her eyes were frightened in their timid gaze. Armand took her hand.

"'No, no,' she cried; 'I am afraid — afraid of you.'

"'Afraid of me?'

"'Yes, yes,' she murmured. He let go her hand and moved away.

"'Armand,' she said, a sob in her throat and in her voice, 'I wish you would leave me — leave me to myself a little while.' He turned to the open door.

"'Of course,' he said.

"'Armand, you do not understand. I mean for you to travel somewhere — for a trip, a journey — and leave me here alone.'

"'But why should I do that?'

"'Because I wish it.'

"'It would be against my wish.'

"'My father will be with me.'

"'True, I had not thought of that. But this idea seems so peculiar, Henriette. I have had no time to think of anything in connection with it.' In glancing at Monsieur Galtier just then his face looked worn and older.

"'If I would be better in the quiet of my own home, quite alone, you would not then hesitate to go?'

"'I will grant you this quiet if you desire it, Henriette.'

"The light came back into her eyes. 'How good you are!' she cried.

"The strong man bowed his head. Tears came in his eyes. He brushed them hastily aside.

"'Armand, don't you think that I am right?'

"'No,' he answered.

"'Then, you do not wish me to remain alone in Paris?'

"'No.'

"'You do not think I can be happy by myself?'

"'No.'

"'You can come back before the season ends.'

"'I would have no heart for gayeties.'

"'Would you rather have me remain away from *soirées* when you are gone?'

"'No.'

"'Then I do not know of any way to please you.'

"'No.'

"'But you will like to travel, won't you?'

"'I shall travel all the same. It is you who have arranged this trip, not I. Remember in the future, Henriette, you sent me from you. I did not ask to go.'

"'But you think it will be for the best?'

"'How can I?'

"'But we will be happier separated for a time.'

"'Have we, then, been unhappy? I never knew it, dear.'

"'This evening we have been unhappy — very unhappy.'

"'I did not think so. I was blind; I suppose love makes people blind. I thought your day and evening full of pleasures and gayeties.'

"'I have not enjoyed my coming home to-night.'

"'And since you think it will be pleasanter to return alone' — he spoke with difficulty — 'then of course I must arrange that it shall be as you desire. To-morrow is sufficient time. We can

arrange it all. So now I will ask you to excuse me, Henriette, and bid you good-night, good-night.' He quickly crossed the room and left his wife.

"A few weeks later, when the people heard of the separation, for such it seemed, they shook their heads in doubt. Some said it was as well, she was too beautiful to be happy with such a plain, uninteresting man. But there was one disappointed person, one broken-hearted old man. He went to his daughter. In vain he pleaded with her for her husband's cause.

"But Henriette Galtier seemed well to know what she had done. Her husband had grown jealous of her friends.

"A year passed; another came. The young wife lived on in luxury, in ease. She knew not what it meant to want for anything.

"She went to every *soirée* just the same. Now she was more courted by a different set. Her husband was too old, these younger people said.

"Paris promised a full season. Balls and *soirées* every night.

"Thursday came, on which night would be a much-talked-of party. Everybody longed to be invited; those who were all went.

"Henriette had never looked more beautiful, more fair. She was remarked by all; men and women turned to gaze at her rich costume, her dazzling jewels on her hands and neck and in her hair. Some were envious of the young woman's admirers, of her clever ways, which added greatly to her charms, to her praise.

"When she entered the ballroom with Monsieur Gaston Bernard, people shook their heads and whispered, 'She will marry him, no doubt.' It was on that very night he sought his chance, he asked her hand. But when the moment came, Henriette was frightened at his ardent manner, loving words. She looked around, but no one came to interrupt the man who argued for his very life and happiness. His eyes grew darker, larger, in his tenderness.

"'I remember too well,' he cried, 'the day you married Monsieur Galtier, and when his ring fell

to the ground I thought it was an omen of sorrow in the unknown future of your lives.' Madame Galtier drew back; her face was ashen pale.

"'I am not superstitious,' she said.

"'But you have had troubles, I well know.'

"'Just now, I am quite happy, — forgetful of the past.' The young man seized her hand.

"'I love you, Henriette,' he cried. She shook her head, and tears came in her big blue eyes.

"'I may tell you now,' he urged. 'There is no one to fear. Monsieur Galtier is not with us to-night.'

"'You must not speak his name. No, no,' she cried.

"'I beg your pardon, it was unwise,' he answered.

"'Monsieur Galtier is not here, I know it well — would to Heaven he were, and I might see him now!' She moved her head; her diamonds flashed, but her eyes were brightest in her eagerness.

"'I do not understand these sentiments.'

"'Who can understand my feelings now?' she cried. 'They will all laugh and jeer and say it is not true. These people will say that I am mad!'

"'You must not excite your mind so, Henriette. Why will people say that you are mad?'

"'When they learn the truth.'

"'What is the truth?'

"'That I love him — my husband — Armand Galtier!' The young man rose, astonished.

"'Yes, I love him deeply, truly,' said the wife, her beautiful head thrown back, his jewels on her wrists and hands.

"'You love your husband! Then pardon me, Madame,' said Gaston Bernard; his voice was choked with bitterness. 'I made my bold request in faith and ignorance.' He looked at the beautiful woman whom he had loved so truly and so long. The music started up, the waltzing had begun. Madame Galtier rose; she walked to the door and looked out at the frantic dancers in the hall beyond.

"'Come,' she said to Gaston, 'I, too, would like a turn.' Quickly he drew her arm through his, then she turned back, her proud lips curled in their disdain.

"'No, no,' she cried, 'it cannot be. I could not, would not dance with you!' He let go her arm, and angry, said, —

"'Have no fear. To-night I would have danced with you, just once, to show our friends that we defy their criticisms, their jests. But now I will not be seen with you. You are too insincere, too selfish — I do not want you, not even for a friend. Then he quickly walked away and left her without another word.

"Astonished, relieved, content, Henriette went out and up the stairs. In a moment she returned, her wraps around her, a covering on her head. She left the ball. Her carriage took her swiftly from the crowded house. As it glided through the streets her brain was in a whirl. Confused sounds of music, low voices, jingled in her ears. She leaned against the cushions of her carriage, protected from the cold. But Madame Galtier was longing to get home. Her pale face wore a feverish blush, her lips were dry and burning.

"'Home, home,' she murmured; 'what a lonely resting-place it has become to me!'

"In every passing thought she saw but one object, recognized but one hope, for Henriette Galtier at last had ceased to love the glitter and the glory of the fashionable world.

"Reaching the Rue Monceau she hurried up the

wide steps to her own apartments. The lamps were burning brightly as she entered; the fire in the hearth leaped into a red and flickering flame, as the door opened and the wind swept in. These were the only signs of life, of welcome, which Henriette now knew; but in her fast-beating heart there was an ardent longing, a precious image.

"'He must come soon,' she argued; 'Henriette has no patience left.' She passed the mirror: she saw her tall form, her mobile face, reflected in it. 'He told me I was fair once; I wonder have I changed since then?' Lighting a candle she held it high above her head.

"No, Henriette looks the same. There are a few hidden lines about the forehead, a slight contraction in the brows; she passes her finger over them as though to smooth the creases out, but nothing more to mark the changes of the past two years. 'He will find me the same woman of long ago.' She smiles to herself as she unclasps the dazzling necklace, her wedding-gift; the stones twinkle and sparkle in her grasp. Then going to her desk she sat down and wrote quickly. She had no difficulty in composing the sentences. 'I want you, Armand,' she wrote; 'I love you,

and so I know that you will come.' It was a beautiful story, simply told. She pressed the seal to her lips and kissed it. Putting the letter upon the table, she turned away.

"'Yes,' she said, 'he will come; I know that he will come.'

"The night passed restlessly for Henriette. She dreamed and thought, and thought and dreamed, of Armand Galtier. She arose the next morning tired, but happy in her decision, — in her new-found love.

"She was waiting in her salon, breakfast over, for her carriage to arrive. She would carry the letter herself to the post; no other hands should touch that sacred message.

"Just then her father was announced. His visit was unexpected to his daughter; she rose to greet him.

"'Dear papa,' she said, folding her arms about his neck, and gently kissing his soft, white hair, 'I am so glad you should have come!'

"'Not already in from walking, my child?' he asked, stroking her small hands.

"'No, papa,' she said; 'but I am going out now, in a moment, when my carriage comes.'

She led him to the sofa and put her cheek against his arm.

"'Where to, my pet?' he asked.

"'A secret, dear papa.'

"'But I can share it, child,' the old man said.

"'No, no,' began Henriette.

"'Your old father does not ask from any curiosity; have no fear, my pet.'

"'Papa,' exclaimed the beautiful woman, then stopped.

"'Yes.'

"'Papa, I have awakened to a great reality.' The old man did not speak, but pressed her hand.

"'My heart has told me whom I really love.'

"'Henriette, think no more of love. Can you not be happy as you are? Have done with these deceptions, these phantoms now,' he said.

"'But this is no phantom, father,' urged the girl.

"'I know too well,' the father said.

"'You remember the separation — my separation with Armand? The papers are not already signed; I was to put my name upon them some day, I cared not when: this week

I think the lawyers said.' There was a pause: the flushed cheeks pressed closer to the strong arm. 'Papa, I have decided not to write my name.' The father bent his head and kissed his child.

"'I cannot sign away my rights — I love — I love my husband, Armand Galtier.' She raised her head and pointed with her hand to the letter. 'I wrote it; I asked my husband to come back,' she said.

"'Get it, child,' replied the old man. Henriette rose and put the letter in his hand. The old man did not speak.

"'You believe me? you believe I love him, dear?' she said.

"'I believe you, yes, yes,' he cried: then stopped and drew her nearer to him. 'I am going, Henriette,' he said. Without another word, he hurried from the room. Tears were in the kind eyes, sorrow in the parent's heart, as he hurried down the steps and from his daughter's house.

"'She loves him,' he murmured, 'loves her husband, Armand Galtier.' He could not tell her then — to-morrow it would do. 'Let her

rejoice unheeded in the first moments of her new-found joy.'

"It was quite true though; her father had come to tell her of it. Armand Galtier dropped dead that morning in the Rue Marboeuf. He died without a word, the people said."

The voice of the stranger ceased.

I took out my handkerchief. I wept. "She was indeed a noble woman, greatly to be blamed, greatly to be pitied," I said; "it seems a sad story."

"Yes," replied the stranger; "but not without pathos. She was, after all, but a fanciful woman who knew not her heart, her weakness, her strength."

We looked again at the picture; but the light had faded from the room and left those silent figures in partial darkness.

"I will come again to-morrow," I said, "and look at the faces more thoroughly."

So I did.

And the day after.

FRIENDSHIP?

A SKETCH.

FRIENDSHIP?

A SKETCH.

EARLY in the winter of 1885 my father died.

I could not but miss so devoted a parent, and it was with a morbid dread of the future that I looked forward to the continuance of my life without his kind guidance and unceasing care. We had been much together during those later years, and I had learned to lean greatly upon his wise opinions, while he, in his turn, had depended solely upon my companionship.

I was not the only son, nor in my earlier days had I been the favorite. My brother Henry, better looking, brighter, gayer, more fascinating, had won the admiration of the old man's heart.

"He is my idol," he would say, "my good, my brave, my noble son."

I, too, had gradually learned to praise his talents and wonder what would be his success in the

busy, driving, pleasure-seeking world. The success which I had dreamed of for him never came to pass.

In 1883 he went abroad. For several months we heard nothing. Finally my father wrote to his lawyers to investigate his son's peculiar silence. After waiting some weeks we learned the truth.

Henry had married in France. His wife was beneath him in education, position, and birth; a beauty, so we heard.

My father's anger burst forth and justly. He swore, he cabled, he wrote; but all to no purpose; the torrent of his wrath was of no avail.

My brother sent word that in truth his marriage had been hasty, but in no way degrading to his family name or his pride.

"My wife is a lady," he wrote, "and until you decide to receive her becomingly she declines to communicate with either of you."

The year following this event brought many changes.

Henry wrote of his separation from his wife. Gossips accused her of having left him secretly after meeting with some former lover.

My anger at these reports was only equalled by my father's mortification. He cabled his son to return at once to America, but to this no answer came. The old man never saw his son again.

My father was taken ill; over-anxiety and nervous strain the doctors said. He rallied but little, and when the winter winds were blowing they swept across his new-made grave.

I missed him. I mourned him. Like all mankind I knew I had to live. Dulness overpowered me. Loneliness depressed me. An ocean voyage was recommended. The idea seized me. Going to New York, I took the first steamer to Havre.

I sailed away at an early hour one bright morning. The winds were high, the seas rough, but our ship went nobly on. The change, the excitement, the fresh air, all combined to exhilarate my spirits. I was stronger than I had been for a long, long time.

Once landed I went straight to Paris. But the atmosphere of the place annoyed me. The constant tide of pleasure seekers mocked my sorrow, the din and noise of the crowded streets failed to rouse my brain.

I repacked my portmanteau, and was soon *en route* for Switzerland.

I went through to Geneva, where, finding luxury and quiet, I remained until June.

It was too early for the usual crowd, and I found myself well installed, without that dreaded swarm of bustling men, fussing women, crying children, constantly met with in the heated months of travel.

One beautiful bright morning I took the steamer for Vevay. How glorious the view struck me that first night as I stood upon the terrace in the gardens of the Hotel Monnet! Peace at last seemed near me. The still waters of the lake cast their reflection of rest into my soul.

Reluctantly I turned my steps from such a scene. Crossing the gardens I passed into the hotel. A friend joined me. The man was an American who had spent the greater part of his life in Vevay, having been educated there under a certain churchman of England.

Leaning a moment against one of the tall marble columns of the hallway, I took my cigarette from my mouth and placed it on a small iron

table, of which one sees many in the Swiss inns of to-day.

The soft night air had made me sleepy, and it was not without difficulty I suppressed a yawn.

"Come into the billiard-room and I will play you a game of pool," said the American.

I made a step forward to comply with his wish when my attention was arrested by a noise of voices on the first floor above. I raised my head with languid curiosity, when my eyes fell upon the most beautiful woman I had ever beheld.

She was coming down the broad staircase with a grace of movement most charming; her erect form well crowned by the shapely head; her movements proud, her step firm. Such bearing told of blood and birth.

"Who is that beautiful woman?" I quickly asked of my companion.

"Madame de Grandcourt."

"Madame de Grandcourt." It conveyed nothing. French names are but a mystery to English-speaking men.

"A widow?"

The American nodded.

"She is singularly beautiful," said I.

"Yes, but without friends in these parts."

"Why so?"

"Oh, she is too proud to want them, I suppose."

I turned to get a better look at the woman's face as she swept quickly past us. She raised her lids slightly: I could see the deep violet eyes, shaded by their dark lashes.

There was a faint odor of roses, flowers so strangely sweet. A glimpse of lace and ribbons, silk stockings, pointed shoes. Just then a gust of wind came in from the gardens. The gas jets flickered. The lamps grew brighter. Putting my hands to my eyes I would clear my clouding vision. I looked again, but the graceful woman had gone.

Before the week was over I had met and talked with Jeanne de Grandcourt and her niece Marie, a child just in her teens. This introduction only served to show me more clearly the grace of her beauty, the charm of her presence.

I would sit in the gardens after dinner watching for the moment when she would cross the

threshold and come out into the darkness where I sat. I remember one evening, after I had been away for a week, my delight on seeing her coming toward me from under the shadow of the trees. I stepped eagerly forward, and, taking her hand, led her to a seat on the upper part of the terrace.

What made her fingers tremble, the rich color rush from her lips ?

"You are ill, Madame," said I, turning my face to her. She stood quite still, and with a quick movement of her head feigned to hide the dark blush in her cheeks.

"No, no, Monsieur Herbert, I am not ill, only frightened. You came too suddenly toward me when I did not know you were in Vevay."

"Why should my unexpected presence frighten you?" I boldly asked.

"You come so quickly, so unexpectedly. Ah! you Americans make movements so different from the French. It is always impatiently, nervously, quickly. Why are you like that? There is plenty of time for all things. See, I do not rush, I do not hurry. What use is it? My life will be quite long enough in which to fulfil my desires."

"That depends. Have you many desires?"

"Yes, and many have been gratified."

"With me it is different," I replied. "I have had disappointments and have watched others bear them."

"Have you, Monsieur Herbert? I am sorry. You look to me like a man who has been blessed with good-fortune."

"True, I have never been poor in worldly possessions; but through the lives of others, I have suffered."

"Tell me how?"

"It is hardly for you to listen to these troubles; you are young, beautiful, and good." She turned her great eyes upon me, then quickly lowered the drooping lids.

"You think me unsympathetic," she said.

"No," I cried, "not that; you could never be unsympathetic, only you have not had, perhaps, great experiences with the world. I sometimes think most people are too cruel, too cold to understand." She put out her slender white hands, and for a moment the long fingers touched my arm.

"You must not say these things; they are false."

"You do not know to what I am particularly alluding when you deny their truth," I answered.

"Ah! Monsieur Herbert, you make it difficult for me to answer. I know nothing of your life, so little have you told me. Truly I should make no criticism."

"Would you listen if I were to tell you more?" She was looking at me with those wondrous eyes. Her head slightly forward, her body bent, not to disturb the graceful lines in her figure. Her white hands lay idly in her lap, the jewels on her fingers flashed in the darkness. I felt the charm of her presence, the strange power of her beauty. Oh, for the right to touch those hands — those lips! It was a mad dream. What was I to this woman? If for a moment I even allowed her to read my thoughts, what then? Would she not rebuke me, scorn me, deride me? I felt the absurdity of it all. I drew back.

"Come," I cried, "let us move from here. It is best for us to go."

"I am very comfortable, very contented, Monsieur Herbert; why do you wish to go from here?" I rose to my feet. I pointed to the quay.

"We can go out there on the lake and join

those pleasure seekers gliding over the water." I picked up the small, fluffy wrap from behind Madame de Grandcourt's chair, and giving her my arm led her out on the quay. The little boats were skimming along the placid, clear waters beneath the soft light of the moon, the great mountains opposite seeming to grow higher as they stood in silent judgment of the night.

We were soon in our small boat moving over the lake in the direction of Chillon.

"I should have brought the child Marie, Monsieur Herbert; I did not mean to come alone."

"What of it?" I asked, a pang of jealousy seizing me. "Marie would only grow frightened, and, childlike, might upset the boat. No, no, to-night we shall row alone. It is possible, even probable, that I shall leave Switzerland soon. I should like your companionship during this one evening without the addition of Mademoiselle Marie."

I do not know how long we had been in the little boat, watching the moon with her kingdom of stars overhead, when I noticed Jeanne had grown tired; an intense pallor had spread over her face. I had been telling her about my father,

— his home, his life, his death, his son. At first she had listened; but gradually the wondrous eyes grew weary, her interest flagged.

"You have been so good to let me speak of all this to you," I said. "These topics have grown sacred to me, for pride has sealed my lips."

She bowed her head, but made no sound.

"My brother's marriage was the hardest blow we ever had," I continued.

"Why?"

"Why? Because he has disgraced us. Ruined his future, his pride, his name."

"And you blame him for all these things?"

"I blame a man for falling in love with the sort of woman his wife has proved to be."

"And you say his wife is very beautiful and fair?"

"I have heard it; but beauty is not everything. Character stands firmer in life's great battle. I believe I should hate such a woman for her very fairness."

"It may be that your brother is in the wrong."

"My brother in the wrong!" I cried. The suggestion was horrible. "But his wife — if such she can be called" —

"Hush. Say no more. You are speaking of one whom you will never really know. Do not cry out against her wrongs. Monsieur Herbert, forgive this woman, forgive her for my sake." Jeanne leaned forward. I could plainly see the outline of her head. Her eyes were partly closed, her face blanched.

"For your sake I would do much," I exclaimed. She put out her jewelled hands. I could see them stretched toward me.

"Yes," she repeated, "for my sake."

I grasped my oars, my head burned. Pulling vigorously my even strokes soon brought us to the shore. I saw the face of the woman grow paler in the still, wan light of the moon.

"I could never forgive her, not even for your sake."

"But what if this very woman were unhappy now, this moment, would you have no pity?"

"None," I answered, while I heard the splish splash of the oars alone breaking the stillness of the night.

During the next week of my stay in the quaint Swiss town, I had many moments of anxiety, many of pleasure. I often met Jeanne on her walks.

But she pleaded the dampness of the night air affecting her chest, and compelling her to remain in-doors during the evening's cool. Sometimes I would see the child Marie sitting in the gardens; but when I approached her, she invariably gathered up her books and ran away. At first this struck me as amusing, but later I grew to hate her for it. Her eyes were so black, her teeth so white in smiling. Her strange appearance had a most maddening effect upon me. One day, when my patience was exhausted, I shook my finger at her, saying loudly, "Naughty little girl." She only tossed her dark curls, and answered, "*Je ne comprends pas, Monsieur.*"

How quickly the week went by! I managed to meet and talk with Madame de Grandcourt one morning. I was with her a long time. When we parted it was with the understanding that I should follow them to Paris within a month. I put the address she gave me safely away in my pocket, making many assurances of my arrival ere long.

She was very kind. But I was perplexed to exactly comprehend her. A warm hand-shake, a few gracious words! Was this, then, the ending of my dream in which she was my heroine?

Marie bade me good-by with more enthusiasm than I had anticipated; but when I said in my best French, "Mademoiselle, it is but *au revoir*," she had gazed at me in astonishment, and answered, "*Adieu, Monsieur! Adieu! Adieu!*"

It is useless, painful, to dwell even now upon those first moments which followed the ending of my happiest days. I have put their memory away, buried from my life. I thought I had found a new anticipation in the minutes, a new joy in the hours. I was changed into a stronger, better man.

I had not expected letters from France, yet was I not disappointed when day after day went by bringing me no news? The month had not quite expired when my impatience caused me to leave Switzerland. How could I remain away until the appointed hour? The train sped quickly. Faster and faster it flew through the mountainous country of the Swiss. The engine trembled and shook, hurrying on and on, but I felt the moments hours, the hours eternity. Nearer and nearer I approached the gay city. More and more anxious

I grew — a thousand fears crowded my brain to bring forth a hundred imaginary questions, a hundred unreal answers. What if Jeanne should not be there?

Once at Paris, I felt more secure of my plans, more certain of my projects. Directly I drove to the Hotel Meurice, ordered my breakfast, yet scarcely noting what I ate, so impatient was I to reach the address in the Rue B——.

An hour later I found myself in the busy streets. Hailing a cab, I told the *cocher* to drive towards the Arc de Triomphe by the Avenue des Champs-Elysées. We went but slowly. Reaching at length the Rue B——, we turned to the right.

"*Numero* 75!" I called to the *cocher.* Why had I chosen such a slow horse?

"*Je n'ai pas de temps à perdre!*" I yelled. In vain I peered from the windows at the numbers on the gates. I drew my precious slip from my pocket. Yes, there were the figures 7 and 5.

"*Numero* 75, *cocher!*"

"*Il n'existe pas dans cette rue ci, Monsieur, ce numero là!*" I could not believe my ears. There was no such number in the Rue B——? Again,

frantic, I consulted my slip of paper. Possibly I had made some mistake. No, the names were alike. I had been fooled. A great fear took possession of me. What if Madame de Grandcourt did not live in Paris? Had she deceived me? A woman with so fair a face and such wondrous eyes! No, no, it was incredible — impossible.

"*Que voulez-vous, Monsieur?*" The voice of the *cocher* roused me. Was I dreaming, and had I really ever met a person by the name of de Grandcourt?

"*A l'hôtel,*" I replied vaguely.

I reached my room I knew not how. I sat down on the first chair within reach, I gazed wearily at the dull white walls of the rooms opposite. I saw figures passing two and fro behind the curtains.

Could it be that I had come to Paris expecting to meet with friends — friends that had never existed?

My brain ran on at random. I had surely turned into a fool. I laughed out loud. The strange, harsh sounds pleased me. The walls echoed them. I pressed my hands to my eyes. My head whirled.

I was in a fever. A chill seized me, grasping tightly my arms, my limbs, in its cold clasp. I shivered, I closed the window. Seeing a sofa in the corner of the room, I crept towards it. A sudden sharpness entered my left side. My eyes closed, my ears sang. The room was turning, the walls closing. The light grew dimmer, the sunshine darker. My senses fled. I made a struggle, an effort — it was no use, for I had fainted.

It must have been the loud ringing of the courtyard bell which brought me to again. For the moment I could not remember where I was — then slowly, surely, reality dawned upon me. In Paris! But why? what had brought me to Paris? The city which I had always hated. I had come for some purpose. What was that purpose? The truth rushed to me. Again I went through the agony of my disappointment, the mortification to my pride. But at this moment an end came to my reflections by a loud knocking at my door. I rose and opened it. The concierge handed me a note. It was, however, only an invitation to the ball of the Legation enclosed with a letter from a friend, an American who was desirous of making up a party to go to the *Hôtel* of the Foreign

Minister. Hearing, quite by accident from a man who saw me entering the Meurice, that I was in Paris, he had sent the note in hopes of finding my whereabouts and gaining my consent to join them.

I was in no mood for festivities. I never dreamed of going to a ball. But at that moment my mourning, which I had hitherto held so sacred, appeared to me a farce. Why should I mourn? If I died on the morrow, who would weep for me? I sat down at my desk. I wrote an acceptance. Sealing the envelope, I handed it to the concierge. "Send it at once," said I, closing the door with a sharp sound. Then I opened my trunk. I began to unpack my things. I took out my dress-clothes with a sort of fierce pleasure. How neatly they were put away beneath the well-packed trays! Many little familiar articles tumbled at my feet, trophies and souvenirs which I had bought in Switzerland. I cast them aside. Their beauty vanished. I began to arrange my garments on the bed, making every preparation for the ball before going down-stairs. I dined in a private salon that night.

It was ten o'clock when I reached the Avenue

Hoche. I found my friends with little difficulty, and together we entered the lighted parlors.

It was an interesting entertainment to those who were willing to regard themselves favorably — every kind of personage present, almost every nationality represented — French, English, Americans, Germans, Spaniards.

I wandered from room to room in an aimless fashion. Truly, I was but a fish out of water. I found scarcely any one I knew, even in so goodly a crowd. My evening dragged wearily. I talked for a time with a Frenchman whom I had met years before in Washington. The man was clever, and his remarks amused me.

It grew late, the guests were leaving. I could hear the carriages rolling from the door. I was standing near the entrance, preparatory to my departure, when a woman, tall and graceful, passed quickly out the door. There was something in her movements which attracted me. I bent eagerly forward with the hope of seeing her face, but I was too late. She walked quickly, and in another moment she was gone. My head whirled. My heart beat. Turning to the Frenchman, I inquired the name of the fair stranger.

"That is Madame de Grandcourt," he answered, "she is" — The din of the music, the clatter of voices, drowned the last words of his sentence. But I had heard enough: it was Jeanne whom I had known, of whom I had dreamed, despaired, and lost. My heart was in a tumult. I turned to question the man beside me, but he had been carried from me in the laughing, moving throng.

The next day I concluded to send for my French friend, but he answered that a pressing engagement prevented his accepting the invitation to luncheon which I had offered him. On second thought I was glad of his declination. It struck me then as unmanly that I should wish to question any one concerning a woman so beautiful, so fair.

It was in the Bois that I first came face to face with Madame de Grandcourt. She was walking in company with Marie. I saw her come toward me. I nerved myself to pass her. She turned her head as my steps came close to hers. I touched my hat, her beautiful eyes met mine. I stopped. I heard the sound of my own voice, saying hoarsely, "You have forgotten me, Madame?"

"No, no, I have not forgotten you, Monsieur

Herbert. But in Paris one meets so many faces. You have been here long?"

"I arrived last week. I went to see you on the day of my arrival."

"Yes! You are very kind."

"At Number 75, Rue B——. But there must have been some mistake in the address you gave me, for there is no house corresponding to it."

"Number 75?" She looked astonished. "Ah! yes, of course, we have moved since then." She gave a little laugh. "You made a mistake, Monsieur, a mistake in the numbers. But I now live at 105 Champs-Elysées. You must come there the next time." I bowed my thanks. I would have joined her in her walk, but she stretched out her hand, giving me the soft gloved fingers. Her smile was radiant.

"*Au revoir*, Monsieur Herbert," she said. I turned and quickly left her. I looked neither to the right nor left, but walked straight on through the shaded avenue of trees near the entrance of the Bois.

The low, incessant rumble of the passing carriages, the brisk movement of the pedestrians, seemed to me but the cadence of a rhyme. My

steps were light, my bearing easy, as on I strode through the wide boulevards and streets.

I waited several days before calling upon Jeanne. I had almost made up my mind not to call upon her at all. Our brief meeting had seemed so unsatisfactory — so different from what I had planned or expected. Temptation is sometimes too strong. I yielded. Just once I repeated to myself as I approached the Champs-Elysées.

An old concierge answered my ring as I presented myself to ask if Madame de Grandcourt was at home. "Madame de Grandcourt," said the man — "yes, yes, she is at home, *au troisième.*" I mounted the winding stairs, followed by the old fellow. He pointed to the folding-doors, saying, "Madame lives there."

Timidly I rang the bell. The doors flew softly open, a smart man-servant stood before me. He ushered me through a square hall, hung in dark colors with here and there a spot of white and gold. My name was announced. A tall, slender figure rose, and I recognized the foreign accent and musical tones of Jeanne's voice.

"Your memory is very good, Monsieur Herbert!"

"I could but avail myself of your invitation," I replied, my dignity rising. "When you gave me your new number, it was the permission from you to make use of it." She smiled. Her eyes seemed very bright. Pointing to an easy-chair she bade me be seated.

So this was Madame de Grandcourt's home.

Culture and refinement were plainly visible. The walls were hung with specimens of the best artists, Gérome, Breton, Troyon, Vibert. Two Meissoniers, marvellously colored, rested on a table whose cloth of blue velvet formed a goodly relief for the figures by the great painter. There were in all directions pieces of antique furniture, French clocks, old bronzes, and Dresden ornaments; while from where I sat, I could see the white statuary in the alcoves of the hall. There were rugs and cushions, lamps and tables, everywhere. A charming apartment, a beautiful home.

I was so fortunate as to miss Marie, whose presence had been such a constant annoyance in Switzerland.

My hostess was even more fair than during those first days of our intimacy. Her manner was quite cordial, perhaps at times it lacked

enthusiasm. But then I knew myself to be over-sensitive, and my judgments often wrong.

When I rose to take my leave, which I did after a brief half hour, she flushed greatly. I stood for a moment irresolute — waiting for the invitation to call again. She laughed softly; her eyes were brighter then.

"When you are passing, remember you are always welcome here." How I had misjudged her sincerity!

"Yes," I cried, pressing her hand and bowing low; "and may I come very soon?" Her fingers had grown cold in my touch, her lips trembled.

"You may be sure of finding me in the evenings," she said.

I went away satisfied — more satisfied than I had been for weeks.

When I returned to the hotel a surprise was in store for me of which I had never dreamed. On entering the courtyard, a man rushed toward me, his cheeks flushed, his eyes flashing with anticipation and joy. He seized my hands, and, turning me round to the light, exclaimed, —

"Charles!"

"Henry!" I cried, as I recognized the handsome face of my beloved brother.

"It was quite by accident I heard you were in Paris."

"I have known nothing of your whereabouts," I answered sadly, "for many weeks and many months."

He drew me towards the salon, and pushing open the glass doors, begged that we might be alone. How much we had to talk about! We even went back to our childhood, discussing the old associations, the old ties. Yes, we had always loved each other — my handsome brother and I. We discussed our past, our future, our plans, our hopes.

It was late before we parted, and as I grasped his hand, I begged him to come soon again.

"To-morrow," I cried, as I saw his tall form disappearing through the doorway.

I saw a great deal of Henry during the days which followed our happy meeting. I found him changed perhaps, but then he had suffered much. He alluded but once to his misfortunes, to his wife.

"She was the love of my youth," he said, "so will she be the love of my old age."

My brows contracted. Should I have to listen to this detested subject, to hear of the woman whose conduct I condemned? No, no, it would be expecting too much. I could now overlook the sorrow which my brother had caused my father and myself, but I could go no farther. He eagerly explained that she was beautiful, good, and true. That their separation had come through hasty words and from no wrong purpose. I leaned forward, and touching his arm, spoke in a whisper,—

"Let this subject die between us, my boy. I cannot forget what our kind parent suffered through this woman whom you call your wife." The blood rushed to his cheeks, his lips; the veins stood out like cords in his white temples.

"Charles," he cried, "are you mad?"

"No, I am not mad: far from it. But do not let us quarrel. Come, be friends."

He seized my outstretched hands, his blue eyes grew darker, and his lips parted in a haughty smile.

"The name of my wife to me is sacred," he said.

He never alluded to her again.

During the days which followed in quick succession, as happy days always do, I had seen my friends in the Champs-Elysées quite often. But my time was more likely to be claimed by Henry. Often would I have escaped even from my brother to the rest and quiet of that beautiful home.

I had become a regular visitor, as sure now of my welcome as I had at first been doubtful of it.

I could keep nothing from Jeanne, whose pleading eyes invited confidences. I gave her mine.

When I told her about the sudden appearance of my brother her face lighted up with its radiant smile.

"Why, you look almost as happy as I do," said I, watching her rich color come and go like the shadow and sunshine of an autumn day.

"I rejoice in your happiness," she said. In this way it had become very easy for me to talk of Henry. Had I not confided his troubles to her? Where could I find a more interested listener, a more sympathetic adviser?

"So your brother Henri — Monsieur Henri — wants to see his wife! Be quite frank with me

— does he forgive her, pity her, and love her still?" Her voice sank to a whisper. I saw again the high Swiss mountains and the placid waters of the lake.

"As he loved her once, Jeanne, so he loves her still" — She closed her wondrous eyes, her quivering lips. "You are, indeed, a good listener," I cried, a blush of shame spreading over me. "But I am tiring you. Your face has grown quite pale. What is it, Jeanne? Where is it you feel ill?" I took the slender hands in both of mine. How cold they were! "What is it?" I murmured passionately, as she remained quite still and pale.

"Ah, it is here!" She withdrew her hands, and putting them to her throat, murmured, "Such a lump just here! I have it sometimes. It is nothing, Monsieur Herbert — nothing."

I cut my visit short that night. Madame de Grandcourt had seemed so far from well. The selfishness of man! Why did I always talk on unmindful of the sufferings I caused to her, my best, my dearest friend?

I felt myself strongly tempted to tell Henry of that charming apartment in the Champs-Elysées.

But I never did tell him. To speak of Jeanne to any one, even to my brother whom I loved and trusted, was impossible.

The days flew by into weeks, the weeks into months, and still I lingered on in Paris.

One night I persuaded my brother to accompany me to the Grand Opera. We had good seats. The music was excellent. The people, the dresses, the lights, the glitter — all was Fairyland to me. Henry seemed abstracted, and left during the second act.

When I was describing it all to Jeanne, a few days later, she laughed merrily.

"I was there in one of the boxes. Did you not see me, Monsieur Herbert?"

"You were at the opera that night? Did you see the man who was with me?" I asked, astonished in my turn. "It was Henry!"

"Yes, I saw him. But he is not like you," she added.

"No, not like in disposition nor appearance. I could have brought him to your box if I had only known."

"Yes; but it was not my box; I was with friends."

I stooped to pick up a book which had fallen to the floor. On the first page was written "Marie de Grandcourt."

"It belongs to your niece," I said.

"No, no! it was my mother's book. But you should read it, — so interesting, so clever!"

"Your mother's book?" said I. "How is it that her name is de Grandcourt too?"

The color rose to her face and flushed it crimson.

"When I lost my husband, I took back my maiden name."

"Is that a French custom?" I asked.

"No, it is a fancy, — a fancy of mine."

"And may I ask how long you have been Madame de Grandcourt?"

"It is some time now since I have had cause to miss my husband."

"You will never, as some women are persuaded, forget his memory."

"Never! My sorrow will remain forever with me." How I longed just then to bear her sorrow, cheer her loneliness!

"If I can ever do you any service, you must not hesitate to ask it of me." A radiant smile lit up her face.

"I might take you at your word," she said.

"Do so," I cried, "and you will find that my word is good. Look upon me as your sincere friend now and always, Jeanne."

"But you could not grant the one thing for which my heart is longing, my soul is yearning."

"I do not know what that is."

"To see my husband." A great agony passed through me. I scarcely knew what answer to make her.

"You ask impossibilities," I said vaguely. "But were it in my power, I would grant you even that."

"I knew you were good, kind, unselfish," she said.

Soon after that I went on a short trip, with my brother and some friends, outside Paris. We remained away about a week. My impatience was genuine. I longed to get back to the crowded city streets.

The first day of my return I hastened to 105. I found Jeanne looking thinner and paler than when I left. She said the child Marie had been ill, and she had felt the care of nursing her.

"Why do you trouble yourself so much over that child?" I asked.

"She is lonely, *pauvre petite*, without mother, without father. I cannot be otherwise than patient with her."

"That is all very well, but you carry your kindness too far. You give yourself unnecessary burdens for others," I exclaimed.

Madame de Grandcourt made no answer; rising suddenly she crossed the room. I watched her graceful movements. The sun came in the window and fell upon her hair, her throat, her neck. She was opening a small desk. She moved the key with difficulty. How fair she looked! In a moment she came toward me with a package carefully folded, closely sealed. Returning to my side, she held it out to me between her white fingers.

"See," she said, "this bears your name. It is the service I am going to ask of you." She was very near me. I saw her rings flashing. Their light dazzled me. "Ever since you went away I have been thinking about it, and I have concluded that *you are my sincere friend, and that your word is good!*" She placed the package in my hands.

"I confide it to you, and when you go home you can open it." She was smiling all the time.

But this proof of her faith in me — whatever it might be — dulled my brain. Conversation seemed difficult. For I was holding I knew not what key to my fate, what clew to my destiny.

Later, as I hurried through the streets, the package grew heavier. I felt its weight. Willingly would I cast it from me. But, no — it was Jeanne's pledge of our friendship; I would guard it jealously, and with great care.

Once in my own room, I closed and locked the door. I could still plainly see the laughing eyes, the smiling face, of Madame de Grandcourt as she handed me my prize.

I broke the seal. I tore off the paper covering. Before my eyes lay the contents — a letter bearing the inscription "*Monsieur Henri Herbert.*" The name burned like heated fire. My hands trembled. My blood froze. In the moments that followed I realized everything. I knew all. I felt for the bell. My eyes were dim, — I could not see. The valet knocked. I opened the door.

"Go out into the street. The first *commissionnaire* you meet stop him. Hand him this letter, together with the address I give you. Tell the man to deliver the note at once. If any

questions are asked concerning who may have sent it, no answer must be given."

I closed the door; again I was alone. But I had fulfilled my trust. *I had proved that I was her sincere friend, and that my word was good!*

THE LOST JEWEL.

THE LOST JEWEL.

My story ends with a word of advice. Let me begin it by affirming that the young American of to-day is better off in his own country, happier among the men of his own land, more content surrounded by the speakers of his own tongue, the followers of his own faith.

How truly I realized all this, how thoroughly I underwent the pangs of sickness, a stranger in a strange land!

I spent many years abroad, studying architecture, frequenting studios, discussing art.

It was a great ambition to become a man of mark, to be renowned, — to live in Paris. I had long thought of it, ever dreamed of it in my youthful days.

But the charms of a foreign education, the glitter of a strange city, lessened in the clouds and storms of a new and broader life.

Alone I went to France, alone I stayed in Paris, alone I strove in my work, alone I sought for knowledge in a far distant land.

My days were busy, my evenings occupied. In the first glow of enthusiasm, in the first fervor of hope, I failed to realize my discomforts, to read the loneliness of my heart. But gradually my position dawned upon me, gradually I longed to make a friend.

It was quite by chance I met a young Frenchman, quite by chance I learned to know him well. At first I thought him self-reliant; but soon his real nature spread throughout his words, his work. He had ambitions. He longed to be an artist. He had talent, but of a spontaneous, impracticable character, which held him back in his fight for fame.

He would come to me with his pale face flushing, his eyes dazzling, to tell me of some bold sketch that he had done. He worked quickly, he used his pencil freely; but soon I saw he never came out first. Some other student always stood before him in the end. How clearly we began to see the truth! We had both failed — Pierre Baton and I.

We had ample means, so one fine day we cast aside our hopes, buried our ambitions, and journeyed far from France.

Once away, we breathed more freely; we knew ourselves content.

But soon we missed the constant striving, the daily occupation of our work.

Pierre returned to France. When I parted from the young Frenchman I did not expect to meet with him again.

Five years elapsed. Again I was in France, again in Paris. The old student life had vanished, the youthful days had gone.

One evening at a *café* a young man sat near me. His pale face was toward me, his eyes were looking into mine. In a moment I recognized him, in a moment I was by his side.

"Pierre!" I cried, as he stood erect and smiling. We sat down together. We talked of the old familiar scenes. I watched the foreigner closely. I saw that he was older; he was changed. His face was stronger in its expression and outline, his character had developed, I could see. Later, when I talked of taking a journey through Switzerland over the old roads

and haunts, a constraint fell upon him, and a look of bitterness crept into his eyes.

"But you must come too," I cried. He shrugged his shoulders. "Take to-morrow to think it over," I concluded with a laugh. Pierre grew very pale, his lips moved nervously.

"My position has changed, dear fellow," he said, "sadly changed since we parted." Again that weary look, again that bitter smile.

"In what way?" I asked.

"Every way," he answered. Little by little I drew his story from him. Word by word he told me everything. His parents had died and left him struggling, disappointed, penniless. He was alone in the world. Still working with his brush, but hoping little now. I looked at him with pity in my gaze, with love in my heart.

That night I said nothing, but the following day I proposed to Pierre that we should spend the summer together. I feared for his pride; but he accepted my offer, and soon our plans were made.

We arranged to go to Germany. Pierre proposed Homburg, as a healthful climate and a pleasant resort. He seemed anxious I should see

the place. To Homburg we went; at Homburg we remained.

We met many people. The Frenchman was indifferent in his manner to every one; but all liked him, all praised him.

One evening as we sat together on the terrace of the *Kurhaus*, watching the steady stream of pedestrians promenading in the gardens, Pierre drew my attention to a young woman in company with an officer. I had never seen his face so eager, his expression so interested.

"She is beautiful," he murmured.

"The face is bright," I said.

The next day Pierre asked me if I had met the fair stranger. I laughed and shook my head.

"Would you like to know her?" I asked. The foreigner shrugged his shoulders, put his hands gracefully behind him, and walked off. But I concluded that he wanted to meet the beautiful woman, to talk to her, to have her for his friend.

I learned she was an American, a widow. At an early age she married a foreigner, for money no doubt.

Madame Dupont was entertaining, interesting, they said.

Being an American, I soon obtained an introduction to her. She was clever and bright; but in her eyes I saw an expression of coldness, which I did not like nor understand.

It pleased me to tell Pierre of my introduction to his strange beauty. He laughed while his face flushed proudly, as I said I had promised Madame Dupont to introduce him at the first opportunity.

At Homburg one meets all the visitors each morning, afternoon, and evening. A strict code of etiquette exists there among the English and Germans; but with the Americans and French it is different. They make friends quickly, easily, —they are strangers in a strange land.

The next day I presented Pierre to Madame Dupont. I thought she liked him. Her manner was cordial, her greeting interested, as she spoke to the Frenchman.

They were much together during the weeks which followed. I felt that I had been robbed of my friend. It was with a touch of jealousy I listened to their animated conversation, in which were many clever speeches, many bright retorts. I saw that Pierre lost something of his indifferent manner; of his bored, imbittered ways when in

Madame Dupont's presence, when under the influence of Madame Dupont's smiles.

One afternoon she asked me a question. Who was Pierre Baton?

How could I give her a direct answer? how explain our friendship? What I knew of him came only from his lips, from his assertions. Not until this moment had I realized the greatness of my faith, the depth of my belief in the foreigner.

I was most confident in my manner, most earnest in my voice, as I praised his appearance, commended his character.

In answer Madame Dupont shrugged her shoulders — the movement meant a great deal, or meant nothing. I could not interpret it. I glanced at her face but saw nothing. It was impossible to read the expression of a woman whom I had known but a few short weeks.

I was glad to notice that her manner remained unchanged towards Pierre. I had an affection for the Frenchman which might be likened unto love. I could in a moment, and at a glance, detect the old bored expression when it crept again into his eyes, the sad, beseeching look which had won my confidence at Paris.

I began to make plans for his present, his future. I began to map out his life. Then I must chide my enthusiasm, check my ardor, by the questions, is he grateful, is he happy? But the queries float away almost as soon as my brain forms them. I despise myself for even a shadow of doubt.

Madame Dupont was rich, extravagant, luxurious, indulgent. I saw the gulf ever widening, ever deepening, between the Frenchman and myself. But what reason had I for the surmise, the conclusion, that Pierre admired the widow? None. No word, no proof, of his feelings. But imagination is a fast traveller, a ready planner. Once started, where does she turn back? when does she stop?

One morning as we three strolled by the Springs, we stopped at Marx's, the jeweller. We looked through the glass covering at the jewelry in his stand. The stones were brilliant. Pierre leaned near the glass. He pointed to a small ring beside which lay a dazzling emerald.

"The emerald you mean?" I asked, following the direction of his eyes.

"No, no," he replied; "I want to call your

attention to that curious setting in the small diamond ring." I soon turned away, surprised at the man's modest taste. I much preferred the green stone, its value was greater. Then I remembered Pierre's poverty. How easy to misjudge, to misunderstand others, I thought! Each day, each hour, brings its lessons, its knowledge, its experience, to us. I became more charitable as I compared my easy life with the struggles and disappointments of my companion's.

Madame Dupont had many friends. She had passed previous summers at Homburg, a well-known visitor at the Springs.

Once I proposed to the Frenchman that we should journey on to other places. I began to weary of the monotony, and long for change. But Pierre was so urgent in his protestations that I abandoned the idea. How reticent, how proud, that Frenchman was!

One day Madame Dupont expressed a desire to purchase the emerald. I offered to accompany her to Marx's stand. As Pierre drew back she begged him to join us: it was so embarrassing to buy jewels alone, she said.

Again we gazed at the precious stones, again Pierre's eyes wandered to the small diamond. Marx handed Madame Dupont the emerald. In examining it more closely I saw that it was a wonderfully clear and well-cut stone. I urged the widow in her choice of it.

"By all means take that one," I said. Before answering she handed it to the Frenchman. He took it lightly between his fingers, expressing his preference for the diamond. Madame Dupont hesitated just an instant, then took back the green jewel, saying, —

"This must be mine." At the moment her gloved fingers slipped and the ring fell from her hands. I thought I saw the stone glisten in the brown dust at her feet. I stooped to restore it to her; at the same instant Pierre bent down, then looking up hurriedly, he said, —

"The stone has disappeared!"

For a moment the color left the widow's face. With an effort she controlled herself.

"It is impossible," she said. "It must be on the ground, for it glided from my fingers." In vain we looked, in vain we talked, in vain we wondered — the emerald ring was gone.

Madame Dupont spoke a minute with Marx. I drew aside and waited for her. The man shrugged, gesticulated, said something in an undertone about Monsieur, locked up his case again, then quickly summoned his colleagues to assist him in his frantic search for the lost jewel.

Pierre was paler than usual, I thought. He stood beside me, the bored expression in his eyes, the bitterness about his smile.

We were all embarrassed. The strain of effort fell upon us and mingled in our conversation. We walked in almost solemn silence to the hotel.

That evening at dinner I ate but little. I was thinking, puzzling, wondering, about the emerald ring. Several times my glance rested upon the pale face at the opposite end of the table. Pierre seemed nervous. He talked eagerly of an expedition he had promised to join the following day. I never saw him so excited.

Madame Dupont was not on the terrace that evening. We looked for her, but were destined to a fruitless search. I thought I understood her absence.

Night came. I went to sleep, a frown on my brow, a sigh on my lips. The next morning when

the bright sun shone in my window, its splendor dispelled my gloom and doubts. My fears sank into an imaginary nightmare and were gone.

Pierre had left the hotel early to join his party on their expedition.

I walked down to the Springs alone. As I came in sight of the jeweller's stand, I saw Madame Dupont in conversation with Marx. The man seemed excited in his manner; on seeing me the conversation ceased, and Madame Dupont walked on. I quickly joined her. She instantly inquired for my companion. I said that he had gone.

"Gone away?" she exclaimed.

"Pray do not look so alarmed, Madame," said I. "Pierre returns this evening."

She drew a breath of relief, but exclaimed with earnest feeling, —

"How I wish I had never met him!"

"How much more sincerely," I replied, "I wish I had never presented him to you!"

Later as we came in view of the town I inquired what the owner of the jewel had said.

"He says much," replied the widow.

"Has he discovered no trace of his stone?" I asked.

"None."

"What are his conclusions?" I persisted.

Madame Dupont placed her finger on her lips, motioning me to silence.

"Hush! I pray you do not speak so loud."

"But we must speak openly of the matter," I answered, laughing at her serious face.

"Hush!" she repeated.

"He accuses one of us," I said; "which is it?" Madame Dupont bit her lips.

"How can we blame these foreigners?" she said. "They are all suspicious, all distrustful; it is part of their trade to which they owe their existence." I was silent. I was looking intently at the fair young face trying in vain to read the woman's thoughts. She turned from me with a bright laugh.

"Come," she said.

"Where are you going?" I asked, seeing she took the street leading to the shops.

"I am going to make a purchase."

"In spite of the misfortune of yesterday?"

"I am not superstitious. To-day I want to buy

a parasol; it cannot disappear so easily." She looked up at me, laughing.

"You carried a very pretty one with you yesterday. I noticed it as you stood at the stand."

"But my maid took it from me, and this morning, when I looked for it, she said it was packed away in the trunk, being too shabby for Madame to use."

We soon selected a good shop, and going in I assisted Madame Dupont in her choice. This business over we strolled toward the gardens. We were both unusually quiet, unusually silent, that morning. Was it to be wondered at?

In the afternoon I went again to the jeweller's. I wanted to hear the owner's opinion about the disappearance of the ring. I wondered what steps he had taken in the matter.

He received me politely, but made no offer to open the case in my presence. I hardly blamed him for his caution.

Then I spoke about the lost jewel.

"I am convinced who has the stone," said the man.

"Why?" I asked.

"Why! You ask me why! Because I am

quite sure that *he* picked it up from the ground." My heart jumped, my throat parched.

"It is false," I cried. The man shrugged his shoulders.

"She paid the money," he continued; "it is her loss, not mine. Monsieur would not have escaped so easily had the affair remained in my hands."

I walked on, mortified and crushed at the man's words. Pierre suspected! Pierre a thief! The accusation cut me deep, it rang in my ears, it echoed in my heart. I began to blame myself for many things. Why had I trusted him? Why had I befriended him? Why had I introduced him to Madame Dupont? His handsome face appeared to me in hideous shapes, repellent forms. This man, the sharer of my wealth, the recipient of my kindness? Impossible! What knew I of his people, what of his character? Nothing. My face burned and blushed as I thought of the sum Madame Dupont had paid to spare my feelings and shield my friend. How noble she was!

When Pierre returned that evening he complained of being tired and hurried to bed and to sleep.

While in the darkness of night I lay awake and wondering, question after question presented their problems to me. Doubt after doubt pierced my heart. I could not forget the phantom. I could not dispel the ghost. Pierre an impostor! Pierre in the wrong! I fell into a troubled, restless sleep. I dreamed of misery and woe.

The next day my manner must have impressed the foreigner, as indeed I intended it should, for he inquired if I were ill or troubled. I gave him no definite answer.

I wondered how Madame Dupont would treat him. But her manner did not change.

I was much surprised when she told me of her intended departure the next day.

She kept to her plan. I went and saw the last glimpse of her as she boarded the Frankfort train. She told me to say good-by to the Frenchman for her.

When I delivered the message to Pierre his face darkened, his lips trembled. The strange sadness was again in his eyes.

"Madame Dupont might have given the message in person to me," he said hotly.

"She had no time to look for you," I replied, remembering with pain her generosity.

"If I had been rich, if I had been famous, then she would have made time, plenty of time." He compressed his lips, and his face was angry.

"It is quite useless to excite yourself. You are not in a position to find fault with any one," I said. He turned quickly round.

"I fail to understand you." He rose and stood before me. His face was ashen pale in its haughty pride.

"I mean what I say," I replied.

"Madame Dupont should have offered me some words of good-by," repeated the foreigner, his voice shaking with emotion.

"I do not consider that she was under any obligation to do so. Quite the contrary."

"Sir," said Pierre, "I must have an explanation, an understanding." I shrugged my shoulders. "Give it me!" he cried.

"I can give you none," I said.

"You allude to my position; what is the meaning in your words?"

I remained silent.

"Speak," cried Pierre.

"I allude to the ring."

"The ring!" exclaimed the foreigner; "the ring!"

"Yes."

"You cannot mean — you are not so cruel — so false — to mean I *took* it?" His voice was hoarse, his face white with anger.

"I have not said you took it," I replied.

"You have thought, you have implied it. Better accuse me openly, honestly. It is over between us now: the interest, the affection, the love, forever vanished, forever gone. Your trust once shaken, my happiness at an end!" He covered his face with his hands; a sob broke from him. "Good-by, good-by to it forever."

"Pierre," I said, "calm yourself. Talk this matter over with me. I am ready to help you; anxious to be your friend. I can forgive you."

"Forgive me!" he cried. "You can forgive me! What have you to forgive? — nothing!" He laughed as he spoke.

"It is best to believe in me, Pierre. I alone can help you, spare you."

He clinched his fists as they hung at his sides.

"I want no help from you," he cried. "I am

innocent; I am proud; I am wronged. I go away this hour — far away where you shall never see me, never hear my voice again. Pierre Baton is desolate."

I gazed at him. I pitied him. The old love welled up in my heart, then was gone again.

"If you leave Homburg to-night, you do a foolish thing!" I thought I could influence him, but he seemed removed from my words.

"I go now — now," he cried. "I go away this very hour."

I rose and went near him. I put my hand upon his arm, but he shrank from my touch as though he scorned it.

"I want nothing from you," he exclaimed. Then he turned hastily; with one look of reproach and anger in his eyes he left me.

The hour had not expired when he had gone, — gone from me, from his friends, from Homburg forever.

I was sad and weary that night as I sat alone on the terrace and saw the moving throng pass by. There was nothing left for me to do in Homburg, nothing.

So I, too, packed my things and went away.

Many times I thought of Madame Dupont. I thought of the handsome foreigner, and what he had done.

But from this unfortunate circumstance, together with its unfortunate ending, I learned two lessons. May all who read this mark them : Do not make friends hastily; do not make friends carelessly; better to make no friends at all. But, once owning a friend, trust him always ; believe him to the end. This is my advice to you.

A question has since arisen in my mind; it disturbs my peace, it annoys my rest. Which of those four persons present at the loss knew what became of the emerald ring? — the jeweller, Madame Dupont, Pierre Baton, myself even, might have it, you know. A reputation depends upon the answer. Pray tell me how the answer can be found?

Years after I discovered it. Let me now add it to these pages.

One day I met Madame Dupont in Paris. Our conversation fell into rehearsing the past, as conversations often do. I spoke of the ring. She

spoke of the foreigner. Then the widow turned and looked at me.

"You did not get my note in which I explained the incident?" she exclaimed.

I shook my head. "But pray tell me, Madame, which of us may the guilty one be?"

"We are all innocent," laughed the widow. "The ring fell into my parasol as I held it closed before me. The maid unpacked it when we reached home, and in its silken folds lay the emerald ring."

"If only I had known this in time," I cried, "then Pierre might have been spared everything!"

"Pierre was accused?"

"Yes," I said; "Pierre suffered the pain of accusation."

"Poor fellow! and would it be too late to tell him now?"

"Too late. Through ten long years have I watched for his tidings, but he has successfully hidden himself from the world and from me."

"Poor fellow!" murmured Madame Dupont, thinking of his admiration for her.

"Poor fellow!" I repeated, thinking of how I had wronged him.

A STRANGE CHOICE.

A STRANGE CHOICE.

RICHARD LOWEL first met Ruth Ward in Paris. He was many years her senior. She was young, gay, enthusiastic, and clever. The older man was attracted by her beauty, her fascinations, her wit. She amused him with her bright speeches, pleased him with her quick retorts. The wedding took place in the Avenue de l'Alma.

The years went by swiftly for the newly married pair.

Mr. and Mrs. Lowel made their home in America. Mabel Ward, Ruth's sister, lived with them.

The ninth year of their marriage finds them at their summer home by the sea, where Ruth loved the warm days, the never-ending blueness of the skies.

Mrs. Lowel had in no wise renounced her social life. She went to luncheons, dinners, theatres,

and balls, sometimes accompanied by her husband, sometimes alone.

Ruth had always managed all things well. She kept her house delightfully, chose her friends wisely, entertained her husband with great skill. Richard's eyes were very keen, they seemed to penetrate through every motive, every action. He judged fairly, he formed his opinions slowly. His wife was less accurate and always quick ; it is woman's nature to be so. With her husband she had much influence. She fascinated him just as she did her sister, her friends, her child, her dependants. The boy was beautiful. Every one spoke of his curling hair, his dark eyes, his rich coloring. At seven years of age he was already growing tall. His father marked the change from hour to hour. Philip was his idol. Ruth often said she could not understand jealousy in any form, but if her husband caused her unhappiness, she declared it would be through his love for her child. The boy cared for his father. He would go to him with every thought. Richard always seemed to understand. Ruth would often wonder at the shyness of her boy. In the last year he had changed greatly. Mr. Lowel had

maintained that school training was the proper thing for boys. In vain Ruth argued, in vain Ruth pleaded that she might keep the child, but her boy was sent to school to lose all baby traits, to learn all boyish ways. It was during his first vacation the mother saw the change.

Meanwhile Mabel received letters from her aunt in Paris begging her to go abroad. She could not refuse the invitation. The sisters parted with deep regrets and few words. Richard never alluded to the subject; his wife could not beg for sympathy; she was too proud for that.

Now, without her sister, without her child, the wife's thoughts dwelt constantly with her husband, too constantly perhaps. She thought him cold, indifferent. She detected a bored expression in his eyes, a disinterestedness in his actions. These things troubled her.

There were people who envied the young wife. Her life was so full, her days so occupied. What need had she for hospitals, meetings, interests, charities? Her home was charming, her position good, her husband kind, her child beautiful; every wish gratified, every hope granted, every idea fulfilled — nothing left for her to need.

She went to balls to be surrounded; to parties to dance every waltz; to drive to be admired. In attending church she was commended; in giving to the needy, praised. There were other women who longed to be surrounded, to dance every waltz, to be admired; women, who went to church, who gave to the poor, but the world did not rock them in its cradle, did not sing psalms in their praise. For of these the world had not chosen; for their disappointment the world did not care.

But there are two sides to every argument, there are two lawyers to every case. There are two meanings to every story, there are two parts to every life. There are contrasting evidences in every discussion, there are conflicting thoughts in every mind. There are different characteristics in every nature, there are many longings in every heart. There are heights unscaled in every ambition, there are positions unattained in every life. Who can deny it? So it was with the young wife, the beautiful woman whom all envied, all praised. She had her argument. She had the meaning to her story. She had the conflicting thoughts in her mind. She

had different characteristics in her nature. She had the longings in her heart. Crush them, trample them, hush them as she would, they still lived, existed. The ambition to accomplish something, — the height to surmount, the position to occupy in the success of possession were glory, light, happiness, satisfaction, life to the young woman. The sameness of society bored her, the monotony of praise maddened her. She wanted something greater. Again and again she took up her pen to portray these hopes, but in her words there was no expression, in her lines no poetry. She could not write, she could not sing, she could not paint, but why not act? Like a whisper of temptation the thought came to her, like a breath of a secret the idea crept into her mind and sank into the deep recesses of her heart to urge her on to movement, to decision, to action. In her younger days she had managed plays, she had been enthusiastic, she had studied, she had acted. Why not take up this line of interest, this occupation now? There were plays given every year for charities in the theatres; actresses were needed, talent sought. Like an inspiration of strong ideas, hopes, ambitions, the desire to develop her

genius, to be admired in this *rôle*, seized the woman. To her husband must she speak not a word, suggest not a thought. He must be astonished, amused, surprised. Before the footlights he must watch his wife, he must worship her beauty, her power, her actions. Impressed with this one idea, engrossed with this plan, Ruth wrote a letter to the president of the Dramatic Club. Would they allow her to appear at their next performance? might she have a leading part? Among the older members were those who knew of her ability, those who remembered her good acting. Mrs. Lowel's services were accepted by the Club.

Yet so strange is human nature, so conflicting its desires, so changing its decisions, so fearful its hopes, no sooner had the wife demanded the request, begun the arrangements, accepted the part, than her enthusiasm vanished, her anticipation cooled, her courage flickered.

Then again came the desire rushing over her soul to surprise Richard, to conquer his spirit, to overcome his indifference. She had believed him changed of late — his enthusiasm, his affection, his admiration. Now she would awaken his percep-

tion, his praise, his pleasure in her unlooked-for success, in her hidden talent. She would teach him the lesson of her genius, she would show him the strength of her power. Thus the wife planned her triumph, thus the woman weaved her scheme.

Richard Lowel suspected nothing. He lived calmly, quietly, seriously through his days. He asked no questions, he imagined no secrets, he saw no plots. Ruth was happy. Philip was well. He wished for nothing. He longed for naught. His home was pleasant, his life peaceful. But with the ambitious nature of the woman how different! Her mind had been ever eager, her spirit restive, her brain active. An occupation, an aim, an interest, she had ever craved. Now she dreamed sweet dreams of reward. Life was beginning anew; possibilities hovered near her to sweeten the dryness of her study, to cheer the monotony of her work. Study became a pleasure, application a delight. For hours she could bend over her book with no fatigue whatever, but refreshment to her mind. Her spirit grew more content, as it absorbed the knowledge so soothing to the brain which strengthened in its capacity, its understanding, its depth. Her heart began to grow and live anew.

The actress developed as the woman realized the fulness of the art. In every movement she put grace, in every sentence melody, in every glance meaning. Ruth Lowel forgot herself in the fascination of her art. In the character so difficult to comprehend she imagined nobleness, goodness, greatness. It seemed she had experienced those very actions, witnessed those very scenes, loved those very memories. In the play she saw great things, she portrayed great circumstances, she imagined great actions. In its execution she must please, fascinate, satisfy. But even now, in the midst of her acting, she saw Richard's face, in the height of her ambition she watched Richard's figure, in the noise of her praise she heard Richard's voice, in the repose of her fatigue she felt Richard's comfort, in the satisfaction of her success she dreamed of Richard's happiness; for his praise only did she work, strive; for his glory would she win. His pleasure was the greatest desire in her acting, his acknowledgment the greatest aim of her genius. Yet in her eyes did he not seem cold, indifferent, difficult? But she knew how to change him, how to turn the current of his mind, his heart. Loudly would he

praise the woman he had chosen ; dearly would he prize her talent and her art. So in the summer days Ruth became absorbed. Diligently she worked, conscientiously she studied every line, every word.

Tickets had been sold for the play at a high figure. There would be eager eyes to see her act.

Since her marriage she had not appeared upon the stage. Richard had never known how she could act. Now the days passed quickly in the occupation, — the study of the play.

It was earlier than usual one evening when Richard started for his club. It was his custom to leave his wife — a habit natural to many men. Mrs. Lowel never seemed indignant, surprised, nor disappointed when he rose, and lighting his cigar, gave the signal it was time to leave. But now her face flushed, her eyes gleamed when the door closed behind the husband to leave the wife alone. She rushed to get her book, and soon the actress was so absorbed as not to hear the key plainly turning in the lock. Silent she sat, her head buried in her hands, her cheeks flushed, her eyes brilliant, repeating over the lines of the play. The task was so interesting, so absorbing, that

Ruth did not see her husband at her side. He was looking intently at her, a curious expression in his eyes. Impatiently he watched her as she thrust her fingers through her curling, dark hair. How her hands sparkled with the diamonds he had given her! How the bands of gold gleamed yellow in her hair!

"What occupies you so pleasantly, Ruth?" he asked.

She started at his presence; an expression of fear shot from her eyes, her face paled.

"Studying," she said, controlling her emotion and keeping her head bent low

"Studying! For what?"

"Amusement. But pray what brings you back?"

"I came to find my purse. I believe I left it up-stairs."

"Shall I get it for you?" asked she, anxious to escape his questions.

"No, no; the purse can wait. Rather would I have you tell me what this studying means."

"I can't," said Ruth.

"You must," said Richard, laughing.

"No."

"Don't be absurd, but let me see your book."

"No," cried Ruth, raising her dark eyes, in which Richard saw defiance.

"Let me see it," he repeated, putting out his hand to take the play-book from his wife.

"No, no." She covered the pages with her elbow. "You cannot see what I am doing."

"Yes, I shall," said Richard, growing serious.

"What right have you?" exclaimed the wife.

"Every right," said Lowel, pushing away her arm and releasing the book.

"You have torn the leaves."

"*Son Marriage!*" exclaimed Lowel. "What are you doing with this play?"

"Studying my lines," said Ruth.

"Your lines!"

"Yes. I have promised to take the heroine's part at the theatre next week."

"You shall do nothing of the sort," said Lowel, his brows contracting. "The part is not a pleasant one, and my wife shall not appear upon the stage in this character."

"Richard," cried Ruth, her dark eyes growing dim, "I have promised. I cannot break my word."

"You should not have given your word without my consent."

"There is no time to discuss that."

"You know how I hate deceit."

"I have not deceived you," said the wife, her voice trembling. "I did not suppose that you would care. In my younger days I have acted this play and succeeded in the part. I have been so interested in my lines, and I love so to study! Please, please do not forbid me." Richard Lowel made a step nearer his wife, and laying his hand on hers, said gravely, —

"What you have done in the past you shall not do in the present."

"Why?" asked Ruth.

"Because, as my wife, you shall do only those things of which I approve. Acting is a foolish pastime, which leads to ideas in our society women of to-day."

"But this is in a good cause and can do no harm to me; the occupation is a gain."

"You should not crave for work of this kind. You have many interests to fill and claim your time."

"Not so many as you think, now that Philip is away."

"True, your life has changed; but you must learn to lead it, Ruth, as best you can." With these words Lowel put his hand upon her arm.

"It helps my life to occupy my time."

"You can make a better use of your hours. I should hate to see my wife appear upon the stage."

"For one night?"

"For one moment."

"But please allow me just this once to fill the part. My friends will laugh and jeer when I refuse to act."

"Then they are not your friends," said Richard.

"But, as your wife, do you wish to make me ridiculous?"

"Failure would be far more ridiculous to your pride."

"Failure! I shall not fail! I never thought of such a thing."

"It is possible," said Lowel sharply.

"You mistake my abilities; I can act. In the days gone by I never failed."

"Ruth." And Richard's fingers tightened their hold upon her arm. "Ruth, I ask you to give up your part."

"I shall not," replied Ruth, a sudden defiance taking possession of her. "This time I cannot obey." There were angry tears in her eyes. Deeply had Lowel wounded her vanity, her pride. But he did not notice it; his own thoughts filled his mind. Richard Lowel remained at home that evening. For hours he sat reading; he always chose the most instructive books. Ruth was too much disturbed by the words which had been said to study now; she could not concentrate her thoughts. Her husband's warning rang loudly in her ears. Why had he told her she would fail? Why had he interfered with her work? Why had he shaken her confidence? But she must, she would succeed at any cost. She must study, prove to him her talent and her art.

The next day the child was coming home from school. It was a beautiful afternoon on which the boy returned to his mother. He had grown. He had lost his baby face, his flowing curls. Richard went to meet him at the train. Ruth waited in the house, with longing heart, to welcome her dear son. As she heard the carriage wheels, she flew down the steps to clasp the little fellow in her outstretched arms. Was there a shade of dis-

appointment in the mother's voice as she asked him how he was, kissed him fondly, told him he had grown? Perhaps she had not realized the change. The boy receives affection coldly; the child returns it. Philip was a lad who never expressed his sorrow nor his joy — shy, reserved in his manners, in his heart. Ruth had never thought of this, and she did not understand. Richard was much pleased with his son. His handsome face, his straight limbs, his short hair, were just the characteristics he admired. Philip talked easily to his father, but seemed confused when his mother pressed his hands and kissed him.

It was some time before Mrs. Lowel learned to comprehend her son. His absence had made them strangers. But Ruth was patient, Ruth was kind. In the hot mornings she would take Philip down to the shore, and never tire watching him. He did not care for the sand; he liked the water, and for hours would sail his boat from the rocks. His father took him out and tried to teach him how to row. The boy was almost too young to learn, his hands could hardly grasp the oars. But he loved to sit in the boat and talk about the tossing, deep-blue sea. Ques-

tion after question would come from his lips, answer after answer the father always seemed to find. Sometimes Ruth joined them in the late afternoons. She loved to wander on the cliffs with her husband and her child. But each day increased her occupation, her study, and brought nearer the theatricals; while the hour for Philip's departure was also close at hand. She never allowed herself to speak of when the boy would leave them. But the thought dwelt in her mind and troubled her.

Ruth had put her heart in her work. She never lost a moment, never spared an idle hour to rest. Success! Success! She prayed that she might win. To surprise Richard; this was all she seemed to crave. She saw herself before the footlights, brilliant, radiant, dazzling. He would admire her acting; he would admit her talent; he would see that she was wonderful; he would confess that she was great. For such a triumph she strained every effort, every nerve.

Richard thought that she grew pale, and even little Philip asked her why she did not talk.

"Mamma is very silent," he would say. But she was planning all the time.

Ruth knew that her triumph could only last a few hours; but in those brief moments of her acting, of her power, she longed to bring her husband to her feet. He was cold, indifferent, proud. She would make him bow his head and acknowledge her great charms. Then silent and haughty would she be, for bitterness was creeping into her deep soul. No one noticed her strange manner, and who could read the workings of her mind? Far down, out of sight, the beautiful woman struggled daily with her life. In these later years of her marriage her list of friends had shortened in spite of what the people said. Richard did not care for the world. Praise, blame, flattery, gossip, were all one and the same to him. The idle words of others fell but lightly on his ears; these people he had never tried to understand. Gradually his wife gave up her admirers, entertainments, friends. Now she saw the mistake; it mocked and haunted her. She repented of these sacrifices made for Richard, these pleasures denied in his cause, abandoned for his sake. But why look back? Why regret? These very people who had drifted from the wife still received her with open arms, still praised her with gentle speeches.

In requesting to act in the theatricals she had been obliging, convenient, rich, and kind. Earnest, energetic, persevering, each one thought her. Without prejudice, without favor, these people maintained they saw her charms. For in these passing summer days was not Ruth the brightest, merriest, happiest woman in their whirling, tearing, dancing set? Now they saw that she had talent. Her acting far surpassed their own. With eager eyes they watched her — a touch of envy in their souls. An actress had risen among them to shine above their heads, to grasp the praise which they maintain was all their own.

How quickly the ocean changes! How swiftly the tide turns! As Ruth developed her genius before these amateurs, they grew to hate her art, to question her ability. Her husband should forbid these liberties of art. The stage, so dangerous, so fascinating, might step in and claim his happiness, destroy his home. Why did Lowel close his eyes? Why did Lowel fail to see? Monstrous! Preposterous! Shocking! Yet the remarks proclaimed so loudly brought no answers to these kind advisers, anxious friends.

At length the night came. The seats were all

taken, the house was crowded. Already people proclaimed that this would be Ruth Lowel's last appearance among them. She was going on the stage. Breathless they watched the minutes, listened to the sounds which told that all was ready. The bell rang, the curtain rose. Ruth is before the footlights, looking like a royal queen. Her dress is beautiful, her jewels magnificent, her pose good, her expression excellent. Now she is going to speak. The melodious voice will sound like music in repeating the words she understands so clearly, the sentences she knows so well.

There is a stir, a movement. The acting has begun. Ruth is going slowly through her part. How her diamonds flicker! How her eyes gleam and shine! She stops — just an instant — hush — what happens? She is going to faint. Every spectator gazes, every listener waits. Joy for those who envy, success for those who watched her in the glories of their art. The time has come. Mourn in your glances, rejoice in your hearts. The sensitive lips are trembling, the beautiful face is paling. See the nervous movement of her head, the twitching of her hands. Another effort, a struggle, but, alas, the words,

the actions do not come. Pity for the actress, sympathy for the woman when she fails. Where are the hard studied lines? Where the practised arts? Gone. Like the smoke of burning timber, all has vanished into space. Mrs. Lowel stands motionless, speechless. Her eyes are wandering by the people through the open doors. She does not hear the comments, she does not read the wonder of the audience, she does not see the triumph in their eyes.

Hark to the low notes of music the orchestra is playing. The sweet strains are spreading; they seem to touch her woman's heart. Yes, at last strength is coming, her voice has been restored. Is there time? Is the curtain falling? Does she hear the bell? With a mighty rush her energy returns, then quickly she commands her actions, her words. The music has awakened her understanding, touched the inmost recesses of her soul. Bravely she speaks her lines, proudly she goes through her gestures. The play is in motion, the actors are at her side. Ruth is gaining courage, Ruth is confident now. Her breath comes short, her heart beats fast; but not for an instant does she falter through

the play. She has conquered in the fight, and won great praise.

In two hours the performance ends. A few speak of Mrs. Lowel's stage fright when she first stood before the footlights; but only these voices join in the comments of blame. Her acting is real, her talent is great.

Mrs. Lowel drove home alone. She had controlled her fears, overcome her fright. But the dread, the suffering, of those first moments when failure overshadowed her, when disappointment seemed so near! But success is hers. Praise rings in her ears, congratulations on all sides.

And what did Richard think? Had he been fearful for her pride in those few moments when she lost her control, her speech, her lines? But later he must have seen her triumph and gloried in her talent, her beauty, and her praise.

She was tired and anxious to reach home. Nervous, excited, she rushed up the steps into the hall. Through the open door she saw Richard. Why did he not come to meet her? Throwing off her cloak she rushed to him.

"Richard," she cried, "was I not brave, glori-

ous, successful? You must have been so anxious —then so proud." Lowel took her hands in his.

"Ruth," he said.

"Richard," she went on, "now you must admit my talent, confess that I am great."

He stroked her hands, but made no answer.

"At first it was dreadful: my brain reeled, my feet faltered, my nerves trembled, my head shook. In those moments of fear I remembered you, I heard your words. They rang in my ears. Then with those notes of music came strength, came victory. I felt I must not, I could not, fail. You saw my expression, Richard, you suffered with me, you prayed for my success." She pressed her head against his arm. Richard had never seen her more excited.

"Calm yourself, Ruth," he said.

"But you do realize the tortures I endured, you did see the fear in my eyes."

"But you did not fail," said Lowel hoarsely.

"No, no; I did not fail."

"I am glad," he murmured, as he heard her nervous laugh.

"It was for your praise I worked, for your

admiration I conquered. Was not that last scene glorious?"

"Glorious. But the strain has been too much for you." As he spoke Lowel rose and moved from his wife.

"It is over now, the anxiety at an end. Remember, Richard, I acted for you. Each word uttered for your comment, each gesture made for your criticism. You did not blame me when I nearly failed? You were pleased? Say that you were pleased — delighted — satisfied." How her lips trembled with nervousness! how her eyes sparkled with eagerness!

"I am pleased, delighted, satisfied," repeated Lowel; "quite satisfied."

The next morning Ruth rose early. She was still weary from the excitement of the play. Philip was going by the afternoon train. Ruth noticed Richard's silence; she tried in vain to make him talk. The boy wanted to go down and say good-by to the sea. Ruth accompanied him. She watched the child as he stood on the rocks,

the swift wind blowing in his bright face, his clear eyes. They stood together hand in hand by the deep, rolling sea.

"Mamma," said the boy, "I heard your carriage driving in the gate last night. I had been awake some time."

"Could you not sleep, dear?" asked Ruth.

"No; and the hours seemed very long. Papa came and sat with me."

"Papa sat with you!" exclaimed Mrs. Lowel, her face flushing crimson.

"Yes; he said it was ten o'clock when he left me. He sang to me, read to me, and tried to make me go to sleep."

"I thought papa was out," said Ruth.

"No, mamma; papa was at home all the evening."

"I did not know it, dear," replied the mother, putting her hand upon the boy's shoulder. The bitterness, the disappointment, caused by those few childish words, how express? Richard was not at the theatre; Richard did not see her act. It was his presence which gave her nerve; his presence which enabled her to overcome her faintness; his presence which helped her to suc-

ceed. Now she knew that Richard had not witnessed her beauty, her talent, her power. Bitterly she thought of his indifference, bitterly she mourned it.

Not many days had passed when she received an offer from a foreign manager. Her success had been heralded; she was going on the stage. Richard was indignant, angry, mortified. Ruth going on the public stage! He was silent, dazed, crushed. He had no words for argument. But the lines in his face deepened, the gray hairs multiplied.

Ruth was obstinate, determined. Richard thought it wise to let her go.

He put her in the carriage at her own door, he pressed her hands at parting. When he heard her say something about writing regularly, misery rose in his throat and choked him. The carriage rolled away, the sound of the wheels grew faint, very faint, then ceased. In the shades of deepening twilight Richard knew that Ruth had gone.

At the boy's next vacation Richard Lowel went abroad.

A STRANGE CHOICE.

PART II.

PART II.

MABEL WARD had taken up her life in Paris. Her aunt had died some years prior to this time, and, not caring to return to America, Mabel lived in a quiet street near the Bois. With an old companion and a young friend she found her home pleasant, her days occupied. The latter, Anna Lee, was French, on her mother's side only, but a foreigner in education and feeling. Her father was an American who had spent the greater part of his life abroad. Anna Lee was many years younger than Mabel Ward, a few years older than Philip Lowel. The young fellow went regularly to visit his aunt. It was during these visits that his intimacy with the French girl began.

Philip Lowel knew nothing of his mother, he supposed she had died during his absence at school. He had a vague, very vague, recollection of having been with her in their summer home in America, as a boy; but even this memory was

fast fading from his mind. "You lost your mother when a lad," his father had said, and his aunt had used the same expression in regard to his parent. With this explanation young Philip was satisfied. Mabel Ward was much attached to her nephew. She admired his handsome face, his manly nature. The young man found his aunt a good listener, a kind relative, a sincere friend. His visits to her house were frequent.

Anna Lee was beautiful, cold, clever, proud. She was much interested in literature, society, religion, and the poor. A strange creature with a strong nature, a peculiar will. She felt her beauty, her talent, her charms. Philip Lowel felt them too. She mystified him with her strange moods, her wit, her tempers. Yet Anna was afraid of Philip's judgments. She liked his praise, his commendations; she hated blame from him: he must approve of all she said and did.

Philip Lowel had graduated with honors at college. He studied for the ministry, taking orders in the Protestant Episcopal Church. Later, through influence, he received a call to Paris to the rectorate of an American chapel. His church was of the high order and recently established in

France. Philip looked forward to struggles, trials, successes, triumphs, with the new forms, with the people; but he took up his work among these strangers with a fearless determination, a strong will. Those who rebelled must yield; he could not.

Among his congregation were those who worshipped the church, the creed, the rector; those who thought the forms too complicated, the music too operatic, the rector too ritualistic. But, despite these complaints, these cries, the congregation proved regular, the pews filled, the aisles crowded. The young man felt how serious was his task, how difficult his work. He must exert his influence among these people. They must feel his power. He must preach, they must listen. He must ask, they must give. Earnest, hopeful, enthusiastic, persevering, Philip Lowel worked in the foreign city among the Americans in their acknowledged church.

The rector lived in a pleasant quarter of Paris with his father, now an old man, silent and sad. The two were good companions, firm friends. But the younger often failed to understand the parent, to read his strange, deep thought. With all his piety, his humility, the rector was not sub-

missive to sorrow, sympathetic to grief. He believed in strength and cheer, joy and sunshine. His mind was clear, his spirit bright. Sowing in hope, reaping in joy, his life knew no sorrow, his heart no bitterness. He acknowledged the good of the world, he denied the evil. He preached against trials which strengthened, disappointments which improved the being.

"More often disappointment creates wickedness," he cried, "than evil follows success. The weak man does not always strengthen under trials; the strong man always remains steadfast under adversity, always weakens in success. Might not the sinner be saved through prosperity, through reverses be lost? Our natures luxuriate, spread, improve in the warmth and heat of sympathy and love, — in the chill and darkness of misunderstanding and cruelty do they not shrink, mourn, and die?" From the pulpit, the chancel, loudly did Lowel declare these words, pronounce these doctrines.

"Pray, work, strive towards peace and righteousness, love, and joy! Heaven is beautiful; let earth seem beautiful too. The life to come, for which we tolerate the present, is peaceful, glorious!

To-day, if we cramp our natures, narrow our understandings, crush our hearts, how shall we prepare for the world which is to come? Shall we carry our cold hearts, our selfish natures, our bitter thoughts, into paradise? Shall we allow the saints, the Christian soldiers, the martyrs, to know the shallowness, the misery, the bitterness, of our souls? Nay! Yet how prevent it? Shall death so change our spirits? We must change them this day, this hour. My brethren, take Christ into your lives, Jesus into your homes. Cast sunshine, give love about you. Your hearts cannot regret the sympathy, the radiance, with which they overcast the shadows of the world. Surely, with such an aim, each life among us has its mission to fulfil, its struggle to complete, its battle to fight, its race to run, its crown to win."

Lowel's faith was great, his eloquence wonderful. From the pulpit his eyes shone with a real brilliancy, his face radiated with a true light. He had talent; he had knowledge. The women thought he preached a new religion; the men commended his influence, his power. Sunday after Sunday they flocked to hear him. Silently they listened with reverence and awe. Those in trouble

strengthened, those in prosperity softened. In solemn prayer they bent their heads with one accord. These people found it easy to hearken to their preacher, to understand his earnest words. "Repentance, forgiveness, must come now!" he cried. "You cannot postpone your redemption; you cannot put your souls aside. Prepare ye then for the day when ye shall enter paradise. Prepare to meet the Christ, prepare to dwell with God." The congregation received the benediction, earnest in purpose, hopeful in heart.

The young man's words were not uttered in vain. They had their reward. Far back in the church sat one listener, one woman, whose heart and soul were touched. From her position she could plainly see the rector, his pale face, his clear eyes, his broad brow. Many times had she gone to hear him, to bless him, to receive his comfort, his faith, to watch his earnest manner, to hearken to his eloquent words. She longed to speak to him, to stop him as he passed so near her in going out the church. But each time her heart had failed her, her strong determination given out.

At length, one day, she asked the verger to say

to Mr. Lowel she would like to see him at the entrance of the church.

"He will see you in the vestry," the man came back and said.

"I would rather see him here," murmured the stranger.

"Mr. Lowel does not speak with his parishioners here," persisted the man. "You must go into his vestry; no conversation is allowed within the church." It was with trembling steps, reluctant heart, that Ruth Lowel made her way toward the vestry. The verger ushered the strange, stately lady to the rector's room. With downcast eyes and flushed cheeks the mother stood in the presence of her son. How beautiful she thought him with his honest eyes, his sensitive mouth, his pale face! He rose at her entrance and stretched out one hand, with the other tossed back his hair from his brow, a habit of childhood. Ruth put her slender fingers in his hand. His touch frightened her.

"Mr. Lowel," she began, "I am a stranger to you. I wish to have a few short words with you; but my name I must decline to give."

Philip drew a chair towards her. As she seated herself, he said,—

"Conversation under these circumstances loses much; but since you desire that we shall converse as strangers, I have no objection, except, Madam, to tell you that in matters spiritual I must have your confidence. It is a difficult matter to give consolation to one whose name and history remain obscure; but you can judge the truth of this fact as easily as I can." There was a touch of formality about the young man's words which fell like ice upon the woman's heart.

"You may know, Mr. Lowel," said the stranger, "that for some weeks past I have been a regular attendant at your church, an earnest worshipper, believe me."

Philip inclined his head.

"A regular attendance at prayer is always a gain to every soul," he said.

"I heard your sermon to-day, — your beautiful words, your words of comfort, your words of warning. My heart yearned towards you." Ruth drew back; she had not meant to say so much.

"It is well," said Philip, turning his clear eyes away from the stranger's gaze, "to have one's heart touched, but it is your soul more particularly which I would strive to reach."

"You have reached my soul," exclaimed the woman. "You have given it consolation, hope."

"Are you in any trouble?" asked Lowel.

"No, no!" exclaimed the stranger. "I am in prosperity; at least," she added, "in what the world calls prosperity. I am not poor, nor ill, nor in sorrow."

"What the world calls prosperity is not always true happiness," said Philip gravely. "But, since you are not in sorrow, not in need, how is it that I can help you?"

"In many ways," cried Ruth.

"Tell me one that I may begin at once," said the rector kindly.

"You can advise me," said the stranger.

"How?"

"You can point out to me the manner in which I can atone for the past, improve the present, endure the future."

"With all my heart I am willing to help you," said the rector.

"Shall I tell you my story now?"

"Not to-day; but come to-morrow at this hour, and I shall be glad to talk to you here after the service, to help you all I can."

Ruth held out her hands. "Take my hands," she cried, "and bless me."

"Philip raised his eyes. "God bless you," he said. "God Almighty bless you."

In joy, fear, dread, Ruth made her way out of the vestry and through the church. Here and there she saw an altar-boy at work. She hastened her steps, she trembled. What right had she within those walls? Had she not deceived the rector? Had she not been afraid to tell him who she was? But had she not heard his words, touched his hand, received his benediction? "O God, Thou art merciful" she murmured, as she walked with bowed head through the streets to her own home.

Once behind the closed doors of her own chamber Ruth Lowel threw herself upon her knees. A short, earnest prayer went up from the woman's heart and gave her peace. "Philip," she murmured, "little Philip, my own beloved child, must the separation continue through the years to come, the sorrow remain forever with me?" Then, rising from her knees, Ruth walked up and down the room. Her beauty was still apparent, her grace charming. The face had changed: the

lines were stronger, the features older. But what of that?

Later, a knock at the door caused her to force back the tears rising so quickly in her eyes. The maid entered with a tray. Ruth ate but sparingly.

"Madame has no appetite," said the maid.

"Very little," replied her mistress absently.

"Madame must eat something before going to the theatre," urged the woman.

"Nothing. Have my supper ordered on my return, Marie."

The maid began to arrange the dress which Ruth was to wear that evening. For the society belle had reached her ambitions, had seen them gratified. It had been no easy task to mount the ladder to fame. At the first step it had seemed tempting; at the second, tiresome; at the third impossible to the actress. But Ruth had persevered, succeeded. Now she stood at the very height of public favor, an American acting in Paris, French plays. Her knowledge of the language had served her well. She spoke the lines perfectly. She studied hard, she rehearsed constantly, she acted well; her beauty was remarked,

her talent praised; her gestures graceful, her voice good, her movements pleasing.

The constant occupation of her life had kept Ruth from wondering, sorrowing. But now this very day the sound of her son's voice had roused her, the sight of his face revived old memories, forgotten days. How well she remembered the child in that summer of long ago! His words, his actions, were all fresh in her mind, in her heart. If she could only clasp the strong man to her, confess to him her name, her troubles, her failures, her mistakes! Would he plead for her? would he uphold her cause? Because she had been before the footlights, trod the boards of publicity, received applause, admiration, praise, would he blame her? If so, for what good was his religion, his sermons, his prayers? Must he not, of all people, consider her actions, be charitable, be forgiving — if he had aught to forgive? His life must make him good and true.

Yet Ruth dared not put him to the test. He had never known her, loved her, as she had known and loved him. Now, in the beginning of his life, in the start of his work, could she prove a stumbling-block? Could she ruin his career?

Could she horrify the good people of his congregation? Could she declare herself his mother, while before the footlights a brilliant, radiant actress? These very people for whom he was striving, preaching, with whom he was praying, working, would flee from his pews aghast — his church forsaken, his life desolate. "Your own choice to be upon the stage," Ruth murmured to herself. "You went away, you left him; he did not forsake, but needed you." These thoughts, so cruel, so true, cut the mother deep.

The actress played less well that night. She failed to rouse enthusiasm, to merit loud applause. She was tired and out of sorts, the audience remarked, in going from the play. The actress had fulfilled an engagement of weeks in Paris; now the critics said she needed rest. The public wanted something new. But Ruth strove to overcome this weariness which she had felt for many days. She must show her strength, her will, — prove to these people that she could command her talent to even now succeed.

A different scene was passing from that in the heated theatre at the quiet home of Mabel Ward. Philip Lowel had dined with them, and Richard

was expected later. Mabel was at work writing letters. Her seat was apart from Anna Lee, but the elder woman heard odd scraps and sentences of the conversation going on between her nephew and her friend. Philip related in part the events of his day. Anna smiled at his descriptions, his earnestness in speaking of the members of his congregation.

"Why do you laugh?" asked Philip.

"Because I am amused. You are so droll. You believe in all things. Your faith is very great."

"So is yours," cried Lowel, "only you like to have a discussion for the sake of argument."

"Of course," replied Anna Lee with a provoking smile. "But you, of all men, must convince me in argument."

"So I do," cried Lowel.

"You do not convince me in this case," said Anna Lee.

"If not to-day, to-morrow I shall prove the fact to you."

"In twenty-four hours a lawyer may greatly strengthen his case," said the girl, "but to prove your words you must convince me now."

"Have ye then so little faith?" quoted the rector.

"Yes; and you must give me more."

"If a woman beautiful, sorrowful, earnest, believing, came to you for advice, would you laugh at her, would you turn from her?" asked Philip gravely.

"I should not accept every word she uttered," said Anna Lee.

"What is this discussion?" inquired Mabel Ward, rising to greet her brother-in-law.

"We are quarrelling as usual," laughed Anna.

"Not about me, I trust?" said Richard with a touch of gayety as he took the young girl's hand.

"This does not concern you in any way, Mr. Lowel," said Anna Lee.

"No, father; not in any way," laughed Philip.

Richard Lowel seated himself near Mabel Ward, and with his presence the conversation became general. The old man referred constantly to his son, looking at the young fellow with fond eyes. It was his habit to ask Philip's advice on all matters; to regard his judgment. The son did not wholly understand his parent. In the years when Richard's sorrow came to him,

he kept Ruth's existence a secret from the boy. Later the old man felt the great barrier between them, for his wife's name would never cross his lips in the presence of his son. Richard thought to save the lad; he never dreamed of what might come.

To Mabel Ward he sometimes spoke of Ruth, but from the day she went away he had never seen her face. At first she had written, then gradually the letters came at longer intervals —at length they ceased to come at all. Richard heard her name through the papers. He never made the effort to speak with her, to see her act. Mabel Ward had seen her sister during her frequent visits to Paris. Ruth was always affectionate, kind, earnest, but the younger girl saw the difference which had crept into her heart, the gulf which divided the actress from herself. Time after time Mabel hoped for some sign of contrition, some word of regret from the actress; but the beautiful woman seemed quite satisfied with her interests, her occupations, her stage. To Mabel Ward her enthusiasm remained a mystery. It would take a clearer head than hers to comprehend her sister's mind, she thought. To

Anna Lee she never mentioned the matter. The girl might tell Philip, and the rector was to be spared this knowledge, this blow. His life could only widen the gulf, and put the actress farther from them.

Philip Lowel had never been to the theatre. His strict principles, his rigid doctrines against the stage, the world, and the devil denied him the privilege, the pleasure, of seeing the poorest or the best production upon the public stage. His father set him this example when a young lad at college. "Keep away from the footlights, my boy," he would say.

Anna Lee could not resign the happiness of witnessing a good stage performance. She loved the players, the lights, the music, the plays. It was fairyland to the girl. Yet of actresses Anna had a refined horror. On the stage she gazed at them with admiration, awe. In private life she scorned their glance, their touch. She would close her own doors against them, she declared.

Anna Lee had seen Ruth Lowel act. She admired her charms, her grace. She saw her talent, her power. She regarded the woman as a finished actress, a genius. Did she dream in

her to behold a social lion, a favorite of fashion, an equal, a superior? No, no; Anna Lee was ignorant, quite ignorant of this.

Again Philip Lowel stood in the pulpit; again he spoke of goodness, charity, religion. The earnest man urged his people on to prayer, to action. The rector dwelt upon the beauty of the soul. "Keep your spirits free from guile, keep them pure, keep them holy. Ye who to-day stand before the altar vigorous in body, strong in health, carry that same vigor into your hearts, that same strength into the purpose of your souls Fight for Jesus in the daily trials, strive for Jesus in the struggles of this life. Shall we all stand idle? Shall we wait and see the shadows deepen and the light fade from the sky? No! Delay not one moment. To-day! This hour begin the preparation of our souls. With the evening of life come weakness, feebleness, coldness! While there yet is time, while the strength, the power, the youth are in you, save your bodies and your souls. If ye tremble, if ye fear, pray to Jesus. He can plead, he can intercede to the Father, who for his sake will sanctify your spirits, will help and cleanse your hearts."

Again Ruth Lowel listened to the rector's words, again not the actress, but the mother, bent her head to receive the benediction.

A few moments later the tall lady walked to the vestry. As a stranger she entered the young man's presence, as a stranger she raised her eyes before his direct, clear gaze. He was the first to speak.

"An unexpected call from a sick parishioner must shorten our interview to-day; but a few minutes may suffice to explain your story," he said.

Mrs. Lowel bowed her head.

"It is difficult for you to begin, I see," he continued kindly.

"Very difficult," murmured the stranger. "First, I must explain to you that I have been married." She glanced at Philip, but saw no surprise in his eyes; his expression remained unchanged. "My husband, for it is of him I wish to speak, I met years ago in Paris. Filled with memories are these streets, this city. It was not far from here we were married. The years went by quickly; my life was happy, content. I had the joy of a son, a beautiful child. I loved him.

"Later came misunderstandings, disagreements, arguments, words, between my husband and myself. I thought him changed, indifferent, cold. My nature was dissatisfied, my mind uneasy. Energetic, ambitious by disposition, I began to long for something new — new interests, new scenes, new thoughts, new occupations. I felt my brain working with naught to work upon, my heart yearning with naught to rest upon. I must have occupation, I must have breath for my lungs, life for my body, hope for my future. I could not write, I would not sing, I could not paint, but why not act? In a moment the idea grasped my yearning spirit, the thought seized my ardent mind. I was requested to appear at a performance for charity at the theatre. I planned to surprise, to please, my husband. With this foundation my studies began."

She paused, and then asked, "What need to trouble you with further details?" But she continued, "I appeared upon the stage after weeks of study. In my excitement, my enthusiasm, I nearly failed, but my husband's praise was before me, the hope of his words led me on. With victory I was crowned that night. It

was the next day I learned the truth — he had not been at the theatre, he had not seen me act.

"In this disappointment I heard no words of comfort, no words of pity. Who could understand? But an offer from a manager soon followed to turn my thoughts to great objects, to real things. Longing for occupation, study, work, success, I accepted the offer, I left my home. To-day I am an actress who appears each night upon the stage."

Philip Lowel had listened carefully to every word of the stranger's story. As she concluded he drew back and straightened himself in his chair. An expression almost scornful passed over his handsome face. As the woman touched his arm he turned away.

"You scorn me," cried Ruth, "because I am an actress, because I live upon the stage."

The color came into the young man's face as he watched the disappointed woman.

"Not scorn you. No," he said, "only blame you."

"You blame me," she cried, "you from whom I had expected consolation, hope, forgiveness?"

"I have nothing to forgive," said the rector.

"It is hardly my part to comment so freely. It was on the impulse of the moment I did so. Pardon me."

How grave and formal Lowel looked! How stern and distant seemed his words! It was of no use to hope that he would understand, of no avail to plead with him.

"It is of my son I wished to speak to you," said Mrs. Lowel.

"Your son does not forgive you, then?" asked the rector.

"He does not know me. We are strangers."

"Strangers!"

"Yes. We parted long ago."

"How terrible! how wrong!" exclaimed Lowel.

"What can I do?" asked Ruth. "I am afraid to plead with him."

"Afraid of your son? Impossible!"

"My presence would in no way benefit him," said the stranger.

"It must benefit a man to know his mother," murmured Lowel, passing his hand across his brow.

"You speak as if you could understand, forgive," said Ruth boldly.

"What judge am I?" replied the rector. "I have never known the name of mother. But they tell me she was beautiful and good."

The stranger's face turned pale.

"Your father is still living?" she inquired.

"Dear old father, he is spared to me," cried Philip.

"Then you are not alone. But imagine your life without him, without love, without joy."

"I could not," said Lowel. "Again and again have I preached that pleasure is right, that joy is good. Life would be almost impossible without love, without happiness."

"I have heard you say so from the pulpit," cried Ruth. "I remember. I believe you."

"It is well," said Philip. "For the true joy is peace, the peace which we pray for hereafter. But shall we not be allowed to taste of it now? Is it not evil which brings sorrow, wrong which creates disappointment, regret? Of these shall we not willingly taste in earth, nor in heaven."

"How easy your religion makes your life!" said Ruth.

"Not easy, but more beautiful, more possible, perhaps. Can you not in the same way improve your life?" he asked.

"It is what I long to do."

"Begin at once," said Lowel.

"Shall I go to my son? Shall I plead with him?"

"By all means; and let not time weaken your purpose, your good resolves."

"Will he receive me? Will he listen to me?"

"It is his duty as your son," Philip said gravely. Then the rector rose to his feet, and, looking at his watch, said the moments had passed too rapidly, his appointment was at hand. The pale, beautiful woman stood erect before him. For an instant their eyes met, then Philip pushed aside the curtain at the door.

"You must come again; my time was short to-day," he said. The stranger bowed her head, but no sound came from her proud lips. In another instant the rector heard her steps as she walked quickly through the church and out the open door.

After she had gone he stood irresolute, a strange expression in his face, a look of perplexity in his dark eyes.

That evening Philip spent with Anna Lee. Again he spoke to her of the beautiful stranger,

the tall, graceful lady, who was but an actress, a stage favorite, after all.

"An actress!" she exclaimed, "how provoking!"

"Why provoking?" asked Philip.

"Because I scorn actresses. I had persuaded myself that this woman was unusual, interesting, refined."

"So she is," laughed Lowel.

"It is impossible. The very life she leads, the publicity, would make her bold, common, ordinary," declared Anna Lee.

"You are quite mistaken. I confess at the first, when I learned her profession, I too was prejudiced, horrified; but this woman is far from ordinary. There is nothing of the actress about her, I assure you."

"How old is she?"

"No longer young; she is past middle age. But she has a peculiar charm, a peculiar beauty, which can never fade."

"You are very partial," murmured Miss Lee.

"I wish to be just," replied the rector.

"Does beauty demand justice?" asked Anna.

"Character does," said Philip, laughing.

"Then, do not be too just, I beg you."

"Would you shake my faith?" inquired Lowel.

"I would make you less charitable, less kind," laughed Anna.

"You hide your goodness, your tenderness. You think it weak to be lenient, foolish to be charitable, don't you?"

"I think it uncomfortable," said handsome Anna Lee. "I keep my heart out of sight lest it may trouble me."

"Foolish woman," rejoined the rector, looking gravely at the girl so cold, so proud, so fascinating to him. "Why hide your heart from me?"

"Why should I disclose that which is so precious?"

"That I may see it," replied Philip quickly. But Anna Lee did not listen to the young man's words; she turned away to speak to Mabel Ward, and in another moment she had gone swiftly from the room.

"Well, Philip," said Mabel, turning kindly to the young fellow as he stood looking after the girl's retreating figure, "what have you had on hand to-day — anything unusual?"

"Nothing exceptional," said her nephew. "Our

life as clergy is a continuance of unusual things: experiences of one kind and another all the time."

"But to you the occupations, the changes, the chances, are interesting."

"So is the work, aunt dear," added the young man.

"Of course, I had not forgotten that, although I neglected to enumerate it as one of the items."

"The greatest of the items, *ma tante*."

"Your father so considers it: indeed, he often wonders if you do not work too constantly."

"Poor father thinks my sermons laborious to me because he thinks them good. I can hardly convince him that the ideas, the words, come too quickly, too easily, to my pen."

"And where is your parent this evening?" inquired Mabel.

"You are not to expect him: he has friends on business to-night."

"I am sorry; for I think, Philip, it always cheers him to come here, to be with us."

"It does. But tell me, Aunt Mabel, the reason father is so often sad, abstracted, lonely, silent?"

"He had troubles long ago. You were too young to understand."

"May I not hear them now?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"Now — well — now you are too old."

"That is nonsense," cried the young man. "If my father has had trials, troubles, should I not know them so that I can better sympathize, better understand?"

"The pain of them is over, the humiliation of them past," said Mabel; "to revive these memories can do no good. Even I hesitate to recall them to the old man's mind."

"But does he not suffer, remember in silence, and alone?" asked Philip.

"Of course he does. The sting is smarting still, and the comfort of hope is dead forever."

"My mother's death is a lasting sorrow, I can see," said the young man sadly. "Father must have loved her very dearly. But what wonder, for he tells me she was good, beautiful, and true?"

"Dear Philip," murmured Mabel, "my sister gave many of her most lovable traits to you. I love you for her sake, and for your own nobleness,

greatness." The rector put out his hand, and took his aunt's in silent token of his affection, — his admiration for her.

They talked on for some time, and then their conversation turned to other things.

The next morning Richard Lowel received a note from his sister-in-law, begging him to call upon her. She had a question to put to him, she wrote.

On going out an hour later, Richard lost no time in directing his steps to Mabel's house. He found her alone. The old man noticed how pale she looked as he greeted her. A sudden fear took possession of him ; she had news to communicate. Instantly his thoughts flew to Ruth Lowel. Could anything have happened to her? The old man's mind often dwelt upon the actress, his wife.

"There is nothing the matter," exclaimed Miss Ward, seeing Richard's anxiety, and guessing the nature of his thought. "I have a favor to ask of you. It has been suggesting itself to me for some time, and I concluded to mention it this morning." She seated herself on the sofa, and Lowel took a chair directly opposite to her.

"Richard," she continued, "I had a talk with

Philip yesterday. I do not know how the conversation led to it, but we spoke of Ruth." The old man started. "Philip asked me some questions concerning your life," the woman went on, "questions most natural on the part of a son, but I could not answer them. I think, Richard, we have made a grave mistake; he should know something of his mother." Mr. Lowel frowned uneasily. "Philip is too old to be kept in ignorance; he must know that his mother is living," persisted Miss Ward.

"In this knowledge we would only cause him pain," said Lowel.

"But have we the right to keep the facts from him?"

"We must think of his position, his church," exclaimed the old man.

"Should this knowledge ever come to him, he would blame us, and justly, for the secret; I am confident of it. With his strict ideas of right and wrong, he would never forgive even our best intentions."

"Here in Paris, where Ruth acts under an assumed name, what risk can there be? No one ever mentions her to us," persisted Lowel.

"Nevertheless, I am convinced he ought to know of her existence."

"I cannot tell him, Mabel; I cannot with my own hand inflict the blow."

"Then I shall tell him. Please give me your consent. I understand his feelings. I can break the news to him, gently, kindly."

"Let it be as you say," sighed Lowel; "I have not the nerve for this. I love my son too much."

Miss Ward was silent. Already she was going over in her own mind how she should break the news to Philip.

The opportunity was soon given her, for he stopped to leave a book for Miss Lee, and, as Lowel took his leave, Mabel detained her nephew.

"A few moments, Philip," she said, laying her hand upon his arm. The young clergyman did not stop; he was in haste, he said, as he started toward the door.

"But you must have time for this. I have something very important to say to you," pleaded Miss Ward.

Lowel's eyes opened wide.

"This morning?" he asked.

"This moment," said his aunt, taking a step

towards him ; then, as the young man turned round and met her glance, Mabel's courage wavered.

"It is of your father's life — of the past of what we spoke yesterday, I have to say." The young man advanced nearer. "Don't come to my side ; don't stand looking at me, Philip, while I tell you this ; it seems to make it harder — the words do not come when I feel your eyes upon me," cried Miss Ward, a sudden dryness in her throat. "I must tell you something of my sister, your mother."

Young Lowel flushed crimson. How often had he longed to ask of her, to hear the details of her life, her death ! "Then you will tell me how she lived, how she died ! " he exclaimed.

"I will tell you what I can, but one promise you must give me — that you will ask no questions of your father nor of me." The rector seemed startled at this. For a moment he remained silent, then he asked, —

"Is it right to exact a promise from me in such a matter ? Is it just ? "

"It is best," said Mabel Ward. In looking at her face the young man saw her distress, and to spare her, said he was satisfied.

"Do you remember," Mabel went on, "you asked me last night why your father was often abstracted, silent, and sad? I told you he had troubles long ago; but for reasons for your good, I did not say just what his troubles were. Philip, your mother is alive."

"Alive!" gasped the rector, turning red, then white.

"Yes. As a child you believed her dead. Now the truth must be revealed to you; she is living."

"My beautiful mother living," repeated the young man. He seemed dazed, confused. "When shall I see her, know her?" he stammered.

"Never, Philip."

"Never! Horrible thought! she is alive, and yet I may not meet her — love her! What does it all mean? Where is she? Who is she?" he demanded.

"These very questions you ask of me I cannot answer. Let it satisfy you to know that she is well — and happy."

"Far from it. Eagerly do I long to know her, to care for her. Pray what wrong has she done?" A look of anger shot from the rector's dark eyes, a look of scorn overspread his features.

"No wrong; but remember you have promised to ask no questions of your father nor of me." The rector pressed his hands together. Mabel had never seen him more agitated, more nervous.

"Has she done any wrong to either of you?" he demanded. "This you shall tell me."

"Long ago she went away from your father's house, she left him. Had he not loved her, pitied her, a separation might have followed. It was a case of desertion with no cause of complaint against her husband. Your father's affection for you has made him generous, patient, kind."

"Poor old father!" murmured the rector, "and she was so beautiful, so good, he tells me!"

"She has many charms."

Just at this instant, when Philip had much to say, much to consider, an interruption being most unwelcome, the door opened and Anna Lee came in.

"The last sound in the evening, the first sound in the morning! What is it? Answer the riddle! Guess quickly! Why! What is the matter?" exclaimed the girl, standing motionless in her gayety to watch her friends' pale faces.

"I was talking on a serious matter to my nephew

this morning," said Miss Ward, "but we have finished now. You need not go away," she added as Anna walked to the door.

"No, for I am going," murmured Philip, in a strange, dry voice. "This book," he continued gravely, "I brought for you." He held out his hand to his aunt. She saw how the joy had faded from his eyes.

"Good-by, dear Philip" she cried, a sudden pity overwhelming her. "Good-by."

Then she sank into a chair exhausted.

"Mabel," cried Miss Lee, going quickly to her friend and bending over her, "what has happened?"

"It is nothing — nothing. I am quite well now. Just a slight faintness. I had something awkward, something unpleasant, to tell my nephew."

"Why did not some one else tell him?" cried Anna Lee indignantly, as she watched her friend's pale face. "Why must you be the one to do the disagreeable, you be the one to suffer?"

"Don't say that. It was my own fault. I asked to be allowed to speak to him. His father is old, tired, and sad."

"If you elect yourself to do all the disagreeable

things, you will soon be old, tired, and sad too," persisted the girl, justly angry at Mabel's discomfort.

"It is over now. I had a difficult thing to do, and I have done it," said Miss Ward. But in spite of these assertions the younger woman soon after noticed the change in Mabel's moods and ways. She had something on her mind. Anna Lee was confident of it, and she determined to investigate the cause, to remove it if she could.

But with all these good intentions the girl could not unravel the difficulty, nor fathom the mystery which surrounded the Lowels and Mabel Ward. It seemed to Anna that Philip had changed. At first she wondered if she had offended the rector, displeased him with her brusque questions, her outspoken remarks. But surely Lowel was accustomed to her moods, her peculiarities.

One day she spoke to Miss Ward. In vain she questioned her friend, in vain she pleaded for the explanation of the change.

"Philip never discusses with me now," said the girl, her handsome face denoting anger, "never."

"He has but little time at this season," replied

his aunt: "he is so constantly occupied with his church duties."

"Nonsense! If he wanted time, he could make it," declared Anna Lee.

"Has he been neglectful of you lately, dear?" inquired Mabel, her face breaking into a questioning smile.

"I have no right to say that. What claim have I to his attentions?" There was scorn in the words of Anna Lee.

"The same claim that we all have. Are you not in the same position as we are?"

"No. I am not his relation. I have only the right to expect friendship."

"Is not friendship even more precious often than relationship?" asked Mabel.

"Not in this case. I can see how little worth my sincerity proves to the rector."

"Forgive his lack of courtesy," said his aunt.

"His lack of interest, you mean," cried the girl.

"His lack of interest then, for just now he is so busy."

"How ridiculous you are!" exclaimed the younger woman, now really angry. "I well know his duties. Have I not listened to his descriptions

of them? Have I not discussed them with him? Do I not know just what his occupations are? You cannot satisfy me with these excuses; I am too well acquainted with his interests for that." She tossed her head as she spoke.

"Will it satisfy you to know that Philip is in trouble?" said his aunt.

"In trouble," exclaimed the girl, "and he never told me?"

"He heard something which worries him."

"From whom?" demanded Anna.

"From me."

"What news could you tell him?"

"I cannot say, but perhaps he will tell you; indeed, I sincerely wish he would," said Miss Ward. "Ask him, Anna," she urged.

"I ask Philip to tell me his secrets? Never! Little does he know me. Only those things which he willingly tells me do I care to know."

"But in this case your sympathy would be most desirable," continued Miss Ward.

"My sympathy is not waiting for applicants," cried the girl hotly. Mabel saw it was quite useless to say more. The subject ended, nor was it ever renewed between them.

Richard Lowel had gone to England. He crossed the channel for business reasons only.

When he left Paris he intrusted his son to his aunt's care. Mabel invited Philip to stay at her house during his father's absence. The rector accepted the invitation, cheerfully and quickly. The plan displeased Miss Lee, who, in her present state of indignation against the rector, hated the idea of his presence in the house. But the duties of his church kept the young man constantly occupied, and the girl need not have cared.

The fashion of Paris had sped away to gayer places, cooler climes; the strangers, too, had long since gone. But, of his congregation, the rector saw new, old, and familiar faces; his work was in no way lessened by the absent ones.

Some weeks passed. Changes came to Miss Ward's home. She never quite knew how it happened, why it occurred, but the truth was evident. Anna Lee was engaged to Philip Lowel. The young man was puzzled by his aunt's pale face when he told her the news. How strange she looked! how cold she was! how silent! He had pictured her pleasure, her delight, in his new happiness. He wrote the news to his father.

The old man sent him a short note in answer. A long letter of many pages came to Mabel Ward. The contents were read by one pair of eyes only, then destroyed.

But the young people were happy, light-hearted. They cared sincerely for each other. What more could they need to complete their lives, to fulfil their dreams?

When the engagement was announced, the rector received congratulations from many of his flock. There were some who began to think him frivolous, worldly. Why must he marry? Why did he not devote his whole life to Christ? Those who blamed him, now interpreted his sermons in a different light, in a new language. He preached against sacrifice. Did he? He argued against sorrow. Did he? He believed only in joy, only in sunshine. Did he? There were others who denied these charges, these facts. Lowel had only pictured the beauty of love, peace, righteousness. He had thought the soul stronger ofttimes in prosperity than in trouble.

Of these things the young man was not ignorant. Little by little the complaints reached him; the whisperings sank into his ears, and were present

in his heart. He dared not tell them to Anna; these things belonged to him alone. If he had violated his principles, his teachings, she was not the one to suffer for it. But for all this Philip Lowel was happy, though hardly satisfied with the strange attitude of his congregation and his friends.

Anna Lee saw the frowning faces, the eager, curious glances of the people. She watched them shake their heads, talk and laugh as Philip moved in their midst, with his affianced bride upon his arm. Like a flame of fire the girl's anger rose; higher and higher the red sparks flew; deeper and deeper sank the sting into her soul. Was this, then, the reward of the faithful preacher, the conscientious rector? Was this to be his crown? Was this to be his triumph? The proud girl bent her head like a white lily before the heat of sun. How cruel it was! How wicked! Yet, of what avail to cry aloud her anguish, to proclaim the aching of her heart? Who would listen? Who would believe? Who believing, understand? Would her sorrow change the current, stave the tide of public prejudice, public blame? Could she change these people? Could she make them feel their cruelty, their ingrati-

tude? Could she turn their disfavor into praise, their anger into love? With her young nature, her ardent spirit, she longed to cry aloud these questions; to find answers written in the faces of her friends.

During these many changes Philip Lowel had almost forgotten the stranger, — the beautiful woman who had sought him in the church. Not so with the stranger; the young rector was never absent from her thoughts. She had given up her present engagement at the theatre; just now she found it very difficult to act. Again and again had the longing come to Ruth to speak to her son. Since that last interview, when she had been so strangely moved by his presence, his words, the actress dared not see him. But now the news had reached her of his engagement; and the desire to be with him, to love him, had overwhelmed the woman's heart. She had thought of writing to him, and begging him to come to her; but then Ruth thought she ought not to do it. What right had she to steal a visit from her son?

It was Philip who noticed her one day as she sat in the corner of a pew in the side aisle of the church. The service had not begun. Remem-

bering the woman, and seeing her eyes following him as he moved from pew to pew, he stopped at her side.

"You are well?" he asked, a kind expression in his face.

"Thank you, yes," exclaimed Ruth, a happy light in her eyes.

"It is some time since I have seen you at church."

"For a time I did not come," said Ruth.

"Why not?"

"Shall I tell you?" the woman murmured.

"Yes." The rector bent his head towards the stranger.

"I thought the actress was not welcome here."

"The woman is. Within these walls the actress does not live," said the rector.

"And if she did live, could she come here?"

"Repenting of her profession, her life."

"I have done no wrong," cried Ruth.

"Let it not be for me to so accuse you," said Philip sadly.

"Have you time to speak with me in private before the service?" asked the stranger.

"Fifteen minutes," replied the rector.

"May I come into the vestry now?"

"If you like;" and with quick steps the rector walked through the church.

When the stranger stood alone before him, the old yearning came back to reveal herself to him, to acknowledge who she was. She did not take the chair he offered her.

"Mr. Lowel," she began, speaking quickly, "I hear you are going to be married. I would greatly like to see the woman." The rector's face flushed; it struck him as unbecoming in the actress to mention Anna Lee. "I have never seen her," she went on, "but I am sure she is good and beautiful." The young man glanced at the stranger. She saw the anger in his dark eyes, the scorn in his handsome features. "I speak of her because I have the right. I do not know her; but to-morrow, did I wish, I could stand in her presence as to-day I stand in yours, demanding her attention, her respect."

"Madame," interrupted the rector.

"Don't interrupt me," cried the woman; "I must speak; you must listen. This deception, this ignorance, is killing me." The man's lips moved, but he uttered no sound, as he stood

gazing at the strange woman before him. "You cannot blame me; you cannot deny me, before it is too late. While your father lives, while the actress breathes — Philip — acknowledge me, comfort me, bless me!" She bent upon her knees, her beautiful head bowed low before the rector. Reverently she took his hand, reverently she kissed it. "Philip." The words reached the rector's ears. "Years ago, a little child, you loved me, you lived for me, you belonged to me. My darling, my child, my son, do not cast me away; do not scorn me!"

The agony of that beautiful face, the anguish of those cries, Philip Lowel ever remembered, never forgot. Pale, stunned, fearing, he raised the woman from the floor. He could not utter one word, one sentence. It seemed to him that life was filled with evil lies. His religion was a mockery, his prayers a farce.

He turned away from the actress, he pressed his hands to his hot brow.

"Philip," said Ruth, "the temptation was so terrible, I could not resist the one great longing of my life." His dark eyes rested upon her face, then he closed his lids as though to shield her

from his gaze. "Can you not love me? Can you not forgive me?" she asked. "Can you not uphold me?"

"Ask nothing of me," he said; "you have done enough. My cross is almost more than I can bear." The woman went to him, she touched his arm.

"I am going now. Good-by," she said.

An hour later, as the rector mounted the steps to the pulpit, the congregation saw the whiteness of his face, the strange expression in his eyes. Did any one guess his sorrow, read the suffering in his heart?

He preached earnestly, loudly. What words were these he uttered? What doctrines? What blasphemy? "Sin, the blackness, the cruelty, the power, of sin!" he cried. "It drags us down, it defiles us! Who is great enough to resist? Who is Christian enough to escape? No man. The lies, the deceit, the cruelty, of the world. Who has not felt it, suffered it? Every soul among us! Who here to-day has risen above that which is earthly to prefer that which is holy? No one. The blackest clouds overhang our lives, the darkest shadows threaten us. Where is our

refuge? Where our power? Is it in the scandal of our homes, in the dark places of our souls? Shall our tongues save us? No! But our tongues shall destroy others, our slander shall form the barriers of our neighbor's salvation. Denounce the innocent, ye hypocrites! Cast blame at the hearts of other men. What is the world but hideous, the earth but wicked?"

Out of breath, excited, the rector stopped to glance about the people. With open eyes they listened; they accused, they hated, the preacher who declared such theories in the pulpit of their church. Away with him! they cried. Away with him!

Philip Lowel saw the growing discontent, the declining of his influence. He cared not. Heart-sore, weary, disappointed, he decided soon to leave the church. These people could find a new rector, he could not satisfy them now.

How he hated to tell the news to Anna Lee! For Paris he cared nothing. For his father, his aunt, he cared much. Go he must. There were many things to confess to Anna. How would she receive them? Could she bear all? Could she love him still?

That very evening he went to her. She rose at his entrance and met him at the door.

"Philip," she cried, "tell me quickly what was ill with you this day? The sermon you preached was horrible; the people will not forget those words."

"Anna," he replied, "I spoke, though harshly, from my aching heart Know you, dearest, what it is to suffer, to be weary?"

"No, Philip," said the girl, looking up into his handsome face.

"I do. This day I have learned the sting of disappointment, the smart of pain."

"Philip."

"Do not look so startled, dearest. I shall tell you all." She seated herself near him while he told his story. The story of the actress, the secret of his mother. Anna Lee was patient. Anna Lee was kind. But the agony of her lover's feelings — the anguish of his mind!

"You will receive her?" he asked, "or must I renounce you, my love, my future, my life?"

"What you do, Philip, in this matter, I shall do also. If she is your mother, she must be my mother too."

"Dearest Anna," he whispered, "will you stand by in my resignation from the church?"

"Your resignation from the church! What do you mean?"

"These people are dissatisfied with me. My mother they would hate."

"Philip, I have seen this growing discontent. But can we not ignore it, scorn it, live it down?"

"No, Anna. Strange as it may seem, reports once started, unpopularity once murmured, the strongest cannot live it down. These people would never feel towards me again as once they did in the days past and gone."

"You who were so faithful, Philip?"

"The past cannot change the present; they dislike me now — that is sufficient," the rector said. But his troubles seemed to lessen, his heart to rejoice again, as he looked at the noble woman by his side. She trusted him. She understood, she sympathized.

"You must receive your mother, Philip," she exclaimed. "It is our duty to make her happy, to change her from the actress to the wife."

"How can we reconcile my father? I dare not mention her name in his presence."

"But he must know of her existence. He cannot blame you, Philip."

"If you will speak with her it is all I ask. You can see her in the church at the morning services." The rector looked anxiously at Anna.

"This very day shall I watch for her," the girl replied; "have no fear."

It was quite late on the evening of Richard's return from England, when a strange lady presented herself at his front door.

"Monsieur has only just returned to Paris," the butler declared to the questions. "He sees no guests this evening."

"But this is urgent business. Take my card," the woman replied.

Then into Mr. Lowel's parlor the wife was ushered. She looked with timid gaze at the ornaments, the pictures. Richard's house. Richard's belongings. Richard's home. How short the time seemed now since she had known him. She heard his voice answering the butler. At the familiar sound her heart beat fast, her color fled. How greet him? How address him? How plead with him? She knew not. Impatient, fearful,

she waited. A figure stood at the door. A foot crossed the threshold. A voice said, —

"Ruth!"

"Do not blame me! I came to beg forgiveness, mercy."

"Ruth," repeated the voice.

"If you have any pity, any affection, for me, let me speak in hope, in ignorance."

"What brings you here?"

"My love for Philip."

"Speak not of him."

The stranger glanced at the man standing motionless before her. How old, how changed, he looked! Had time, the destroyer, rested its harsh hand so heavily upon him? Had the sorrows of the past been so furrowed on his brow? The woman uttered no word; speech forsook her in the pity of her heart for the old, white-haired man.

"It is to spare my son I beg you leave me," the voice went on; "his life must be considered, now that mine is done."

"No, no, say it not," cried the woman.

"His future is before him; let us not overshadow its joys by our foolish memories. The

past is dead. Why revive its pains? why disturb its disappointments?"

"To me the present is but the past; the echoes even now resound from hour to hour. I hear the voices of days gone by repeated in my life. I care not for the present. I will sacrifice the future for one sweet moment of the past." The old man passed his hand across his brow.

"But of him must we think; for Philip's sake shall we not renew the past." The figure moved to the door; but the woman darted forward.

"You shall not leave me thus," she cried; "I have suffered, for this hour longed; now must you hear me out. For my son I shall renounce my present life, give up my profession, my stage."

"These years have I spared him the knowledge of your public life; it is only lately he has learned that you, his mother, lives." At this word the color mounted to the woman's face.

"No longer can I bear the separation; no longer can I stand the loneliness, the sorrow, of my days. Let Philip come to me. Have I not the right to him?" she asked. A look of anger crept into the old man's eyes at this question.

"While I live you shall not take him from me," the father cried.

"Think you not that I have done without him patiently, nobly, these long years? Now my turn has come."

"You left him," said Richard.

"I left him: now I return to him," said Ruth, her beautiful eyes bent upon the ground.

"He knows no mother; his wife will love him soon." The stranger made a movement of disdain. She turned her eyes to the door — a figure stood erect upon the threshold.

"Philip!" she cried, "Philip!" The old man turned. His face paled, his body trembled.

"My son," he murmured hoarsely, then tottered to his side.

Motionless the two stood looking at the stranger in their home.

"Father," said Philip, in his strong, young voice.

"A stranger to you," muttered the old man, pointing to the woman.

"Nay, father, say it not. She is no stranger; she belongs to us." The color left the woman's face. Oh, the rush of gratitude, the wave of

joy, which overspread her soul! The rector advanced; in his strong hand he took her trembling fingers. In a moment they rested in the old man's withered grasp.

"Take her," said the rector; "take her, father, to your heart." With a sob of joy, love, peace, Richard drew the woman toward him.

"Ruth," he murmured, "Ruth." Her head sank, her lips moved in a mute prayer. The rector had restored her blessings; she owed this happiness, this joy, to him. His prayers, his sermons, had so changed the man to the priest, the rector to the servant of the Lord.

The time drew near. It was Philip Lowel's last day in the church where he had lived and worked. The pews were filled as he stood before the congregation.

His last sermon was great, wonderful. With his words of wisdom, words of comfort, the people sat impressed. It seemed that a divine power had been given him, a mighty strength been granted him, that day. Even now among that

congregation are some who can recall his beauty, his eloquence, his goodness, his grace. An all-seeing One had blessed the rector, an Almighty hand had guided him in that last trial. His face was pure, his spirit holy, these people said. Why must he leave them? Who could fill his place? But the sorrow came too late; the congregation had blamed him. He was not worthy to administer, to feed their souls, they said.

A quiet wedding took place soon after, in the early morning of a new day. The bride was pale, haughty, beautiful, as she promised at the altar the vows of wedded life. In the front pew was Richard Lowel, beside him stood his wife. Mabel Ward was close at hand. The words were quickly spoken, the benediction said.

Then beautiful sounded the organ, triumphantly sang the choir.

THE END.

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